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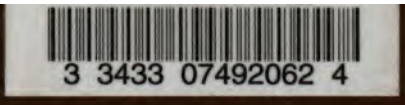
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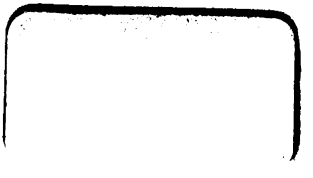
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ADVENTURES

OF AN

EVANGELIST

A CIRCUMSTANTIAL NARRATIVE OF

COMMONPLACE EVENTS

BY NELSON AYERS

CHICAGO:
LAIRD & LEE, Publishers.

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ADVENTURES OF AN EVANGELIST

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Nelson Ayers



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1892

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PREFACE

The following tale has been called wild, improbable, extravagant. It is all of that, and being so is a demonstration that "Truth is stranger than fiction," as all its main incidents are drawn from life. The camp-meeting scene in particular is denounced as absurdly impossible, whereas its literal truth is acknowledged by all who are familiar with the stage and the actors depicted.

It has been said that many good people will be offended at this publication. The author desires to disclaim any intention of hurting the feelings of any good people, and is at a loss to understand how they can be hurt by the exposure of charlatanism and hypocrisy, and the laying bare of crying evils and wrongs. To no heart are the interests of pure and undefiled religion dearer than to that of

THE AUTHOR.

Seven Gables

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ADVENTURES OF AN EVANGELIST

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH THE HERO RECOGNIZES HIS VOCATION

"'What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the world and lose his own soul?' Here is the great question that the spirit puts to every one of us. You are business men, practical men and women of the world. Here is a practical question for you—a question such as you ask yourselves every day about practical matters—What shall I make by it? Religion, my friends, is a simple question of profit and loss. You make the world and lose your own souls. What is the profit? It's hell-fire! It's the worm that dieth not! It's everlasting torment, damnation and death!"

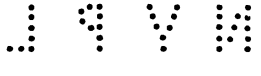
These words, and many like, shouted out at the top of a stentorian voice, with a prolonged swell on the emphatic syllables and a peculiar falling inflection on the final word of each sentence, saluted the ears of two men who entered the gallery of a building where a revival meeting was in progress and seated themselves close to the balustrade for the purpose of viewing the assembly. They were both men of ordinary appearance, dressed in well-worn street costume.

One of them, who leaned back upon the bench, propped his knees against the balustrade and gazed intently at the speaker, was a man somewhat above the ordinary height, with a rather thin face, pale blue eyes, sandy hair and a full reddish-brown beard.

This was Abelard Blowman, A. B., who in years past had taken his degree in the arts at the University of Mickleton, in the state of Illinois; and, at the time spoken of, was following the business of sewing-machine agent and public bill-poster in the city of Aurora.

His companion, a man several inches shorter in stature, and a number of pounds heavier in weight, of dark hair and gray eyes, and an immense mustache waxed to a stiff point on either side of his full mouth, rejoiced in the name of Jacob Samuel Smith, with no literary appendage, and pursued the avocation of delivery cartman for a grocery store; which employment, as he possessed a good tenor voice, he varied by musical performances in one of the choirs of the said city. He sat by his friend Blowman with his arms folded upon the balustrade, and his eyes wandering over the congregation below.

The house, or church, in which they sat was a large, plain building, with immense square windows relieving at intervals its blank white walls. At the end farthest from the gallery, wherein our friends sat, was a raised platform supporting a huge pulpit, behind which the speaker stood. He was Mr. Rousem, the Evangelist, a man of considerable presence, deep voice and immense nervous energy, all of which gifts he was bringing to bear upon the crowded audience, rushing from end to end of the platform, gesticulating like a rail-splitter, and shouting his words in a tone that might have been heard a mile. Upon a sofa behind him sat two ecclesiastics in black coats and white vests and neckties. Dr. Stolid, the pastor of the church in which the meeting was being held, who, with head bent devoutly upon his hand, seemed engaged in prayer, but was really indulging in a nap, superinduced by the late hour and the many lights; and Mr. Pleasal with crossed legs, folded arms and



neatly shaved face, was gazing intently at the large clock which adorned the front of the gallery opposite. All these things our two friends in the gallery noted, as well as the occasional display of tearful handkerchiefs on the part of some of the weaker members of the congregation, the deep-drawn sighs, and the profound amens that issued from the corner to the right of the preacher.

Mr. Rousem at length paused in his discourse, and having deliberately wiped his face with a large handkerchief, drew a long breath and said:

"My friends, I want to ask you for a contribution for the good work. While Brothers Williams and Jones pass the plate I will relate a sad occurrence which happened while I was conducting a series of meetings at Erie; and I beg the congregation meanwhile to remain seated."

In spite of this request, when the gentlemen named arose to discharge their office, there was a considerable stampede at the farther end of the church; and among others our acquaintance, J. S. Smith, arose and said to his friend, in an undertone:

"Come, Blowman, we have had enough of this. Let's go."

"No," answered the other, "not yet. I've got an idea; and I want to see the end of this business."

"Well, I am going," said Smith, "good night, old fellow;" and he stamped noisily downstairs.

Mr. Abelard Blowman, A. B., did not answer, nor move except to take his knees off the balustrade and put his elbows upon it, while his pale blue eyes followed the plates, as they passed slowly from hand to hand, and he went through a mental calculation of the amounts that they received, as nickels, dimes and ragged bits of fractional currency accumulated upon them. One of the collectors at last mounted to the gallery and presented the plate before our hero.

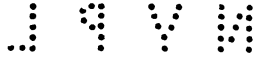
"What is this collection for?" Mr. Blowman asked of Mr. Jones, as he fumbled in his pocket and sharply eyed the plate, endeavoring to estimate the amount of money upon it. It held about $10 and yet had finished but half its tour.

"To pay Mr. Rousem's expenses," answered the other. "He is a noble worker."

"Yes, indeed," responded Mr. Blowman with a deep sigh, droping a nickel into the plate. "I never was so touched in my life."

"Perhaps you had better stay to the inquiry meeting, Blowman, it won't hurt you," timidly rejoined Mr. Jones, with an anxious glance at the sandy hair of our friend.

"Thank you, Mr. Jones, I think I will." The collector passed on, while Mr. Blowman resumed his posture and his mental calculation, giving not a thought to the soul-harrowing story that Mr. Rousem was meanwhile bawling out about a young man who had almost been converted by himself, but had fallen away and gone on a Sunday boating excursion and was drowned. All which he related with great unction, and with the addition of numberless particulars and pious comments calculated to consume the time while the collectors were busy. When they had finished their labors and deposited the well-filled plates upon the pulpit, the speaker wound up the account of the funeral and of his own edifying remarks on the occasion, by announcing rather abruptly that Dr. Stolid would pray. The collection had awakened the doctor and he proceeded to pray accordingly. Mr. Rousem then gave out the hymn, "Come to Jesus," and invited all who felt interested in their souls to take the front seats while the sinners departed. The hymn, with its monotonous repetition and wailing cadence, was sung; the sinners departed, rustling and stamping out on their way to perdition, *i. e.*, to their



homes and beds, and a dozen or twenty came and seated themselves in the front pews, Abelard Blowman, A. B., among them, with his head laid dejectedly on the back of the pew before him. A prayer was then made by Brother Williams at Mr. Rousem's request, after which the Evangelist exhorted the anxious ones in the pews to "bear testimony." An awkward pause ensued. No one volunteered any testimony. But Mr. Rousem was equal to the occasion. His eye fell on the sandy head of Mr. Blowman, and having asked Mr. Pleasal his name, he spoke out with a loud voice:

"Brother Blowman, have you found the Lord? Put your faith in Him and speak boldly in His behalf. We are all His friends." Thus appealed to, Mr. Blowman raised his head and rose slowly to his feet. He was not a whit abashed, nor had been for many a year, and fixing his eyes steadily upon the plates before him, he said:

"My heart, brethren, is too full for utterance. I have lived a very careless and sinful life. I have often rejected the message of salvation. I came here to-night a servant of the devil, with my heart full of the world, prompted by mere idle curiosity. But the things that I have seen and heard have touched me to the quick. I repent of my sins. I embrace my Redeemer and devote my life to His service from now henceforth, so help me God."

"Amen," responded Brother Jones. "Amen," devotedly echoed Brother Williams, secretly remembering a balance in his books which he now hoped would not prove a bad debt. "Here is a soul snatched like a brand from the burning," shouted Mr. Rousem; "let us give him the right hand of fellowship." Herewith followed a general handshaking, after which most of the other inquirers, encouraged by Mr. Blowman's example, likewise bore testimony, and the meeting broke up.

Mr. Blowman, after parting with the brethren, walked pensively homeward. His home was a small cottage in the outskirts of the city, which he quietly entered, hoping that the inmates were asleep. And so they were, with the exception of Mrs. Blowman, a pale little woman, whose careworn face yet bore some traces of the soft curves and delicate color that had won the heart of her husband, ten years before. She was sitting in her shabby front room stitching busily at some ragged little garment and patiently watching for her husband's home-coming. His late arrival did not surprise her, for it was seldom earlier; and when she heard his hand on the door she ran to throw it open, and put her mouth up for a kiss, which was carelessly given; she moved out the easiest chair, brought slippers and dressing-gown and stood watching her husband as he made himself comfortable and lighted his pipe.

"Abelard, love, you look tired to-night. Have you been very busy to-day?" she ventured to remark.

"Yes, tolerably," he replied. She picked up her sewing, and sitting down continued:

"Joseph fell out of a tree this afternoon and sprained his ankle so that he can hardly walk. The baby has been quite feverish and fretful all day."

"Humph!"

"The help says she is going to quit and wants her wages for the last two months," added Mrs. B., glancing apprehensively at the pale blue eyes.

"Well," he said after a pause, "I am afraid she will have to want. I am flat broke just now."

Another pause, then she said:

"Mr. Williams' clerk was here this morning and said that he could not find you at the office, and that if his bill was not paid directly there would be trouble. If he stops our credit I don't know what we shall do."

"Never mind," returned Mr. Blowman, reassuringly; "I think I am all right with Mr. Williams now. He won't be afraid to trust me awhile. The fact is, Lucy, I got religion to-night. I went to hear Mr. Rousem preach, and made a confession, and I am going to lead a different life. There, there, don't make a fuss," he continued, for at this she had thrown herself on her knees at his feet and was weeping her thankfulness on his breast. "Don't cry (kissing her); go to bed; I want to think awhile."

So the overjoyed wife, with a warm spot on her cheek where the unwonted kiss had fallen, and a warmer one in her heart at the unhoped-for answer of her many prayers, retired to her room to give thanks to God and dream of happiness, leaving the husband to his meditations. He looked after her, as she closed the door, with a half-frown on his face, caused by the thought of the expense which she and her little ones were to him. The thought brought back to his mind the vision of the plates which he had seen that evening, so he settled himself back in his chair, gazed into the tobacco smoke that curled from his lips, and resigned himself to the current of his imaginings. Presently, as was not unusual with him, he began to think aloud:

"It must have been at least forty dollars—forty, and perhaps more. I saw one bill in the plate. That is in every night, nearly. This meeting has lasted ten days, and may last ten more. Parsons are poorly paid. Stolid gets but seven hundred, and they have hard work to raise that. Rousem had a meeting at Smithville the first of the month. They say that he was very successful; that means money as well as souls, I guess. He is going to Kewanee when he gets through here. He keeps busy. Four hundred dollars in ten days. If Smithville and Kewanee do as well, that amounts to about twelve hundred a

month, expenses too. He is staying with Williams and living like a lord. I saw him driving out with Miss Williams yesterday."

Excited by these thoughts, Mr. Blowman raised himself in the chair and addressed his pipe argumentatively:

"Now a fellow like Rousem does a great deal of good. How much more useful his life is than mine, and I am as smart as he is. I believe I can preach a better sermon. I was thought a fine speaker at the University of Mickleton. Was not I president of the Demosthenian Society, and did I not take the junior prize in declamation? 'To be, or not to be—that is the question. Whether it's bolder in the mind to suffer the—the—Ah, those were jolly times. Then I studied law, and I was admitted to the bar; then I was married; that was my false step; Lucy was pretty, and she loved me—I loved her too, I suppose. But love and matrimony are very different things. I couldn't support her at the law; I don't think that was my vocation. I tried railroading; I believe I should have been a conductor in time, but for that spree. Then I clerked in Chicago. Yes, I even had to try coal-heaving; but I succeeded better as book-agent; I did pretty well at that, till that confounded dog crippled me. So I've knocked around and wasted my life without a vocation. What am I now? Where are the aspirations of my youth? I thought that by this time I would be in the United States senate—agent for a sewing-machine—city bill-poster; I owe the company $500; I hate to send it on; it will leave me flat. Well, I'll see about it. But why can't I make my life useful? I believe I should succeed as an evangelist; think of the happiness of doing good; I wonder if that is not my vocation? I won't have to give up the care of my family; forty dollars! I can hardly make that much in a month. I shall do

it! It certainly is my vocation. I'll give myself to the service of God."

Having reached this conclusion, Mr. Blowman paused to felicitate himself and fill his pipe. His vocation was found. Everything pointed him to it. He wondered that he had never seen it before. Why had he been put in the way of obtaining an education—a gift for which he had heretofore found no use.

Why had he been endowed with elocutionary powers—an ability that had stood him in no stead since the cessation of his membership in the Demosthenian Society, except to enable him to sell a few worthless books at enormous prices. Why did he feel this inward moving to embrace the self-sacrificing life that opened before him? Certainly all these things were proofs that his vocation in the world was that of an evangelist. It was all plain now. Often he had wondered and doubted what purpose he was intended to serve in the world. He wondered no longer. He doubted no longer. Come what might an evangelist he would be. He raised his heart a moment in devout thankfulness to God that he had been led to the light, and then turned himself to the consideration of such detailed plans as might enable him to enter successfully upon the new path of life which he was resolved to follow. After having spent some time in this pleasing occupation he retired to his bed and his dreams, in which congregations, travels, sermons, souls and collections were mixed in inextricable confusion.

CHAPTER II

WHICH RELATES OUR HERO'S PREPARATIONS AND PRECAUTIONS IN EXECUTING HIS DESIGNS, WITH SOME OTHER NOTABLE EVENTS

Mr. Blowman awoke the next morning after the events narrated in the last chapter, little rested by his slumber, and not in the best possible humor. Having succeeded in spreading his mental cloud over the whole family, he sallied out, after a disagreeable breakfast, to begin carrying his designs into execution. He went first to his office, which he opened and swept, not being able to employ a clerk to perform these necessary functions, and then sat down to look over the morning paper. While so engaged, he heard a slow and heavy step climbing the stairs which led to his place of business, and his companion of the night before stood in the doorway with a cloudy face and a dejected air. Mr. Blowman looked up as he appeared, and took in his despondent mien and also the fact that his usual work-day costume of calico sleeves and a canvas apron was replaced by his holiday garb of gray twilled. So he remarked with some surprise:

"Hello! Smith, old fellow, what's the matter? Not at work to-day? What has happened? You look as somber as a tombstone. Come in and sit down. I am glad to see you. I was about to hunt you up." Mr. Smith, still standing in the doorway, looked steadily at the other a few moments in silence, and then said:

"Blowman, are you my friend?"

"Of course," was the surprised answer.

"Yes, I know," rejoined Mr. Smith, "we have been friendly enough as the world goes; but a friend in fine weather is one thing, and a friend in stormy weather is another thing. I have never cared much whether I had friends or not. I never needed any till now. I am a stranger in Aurora—and everywhere else, for that matter. True enough I have plenty of acquaintances, but now I want a friend, and when I look around to find one, I don't see any that I can trust, except it may be you, and I don't feel very certain of it. Now I ask you, in all seriousness, though you may think me a fool for my pains, are you my friend—a friend I can trust?"

"My dear fellow," said Mr. Blowman, arising and taking him by the hand, "you are not mistaken in me; I assure you that I am your true friend; one that will do anything to serve you. Friendship is a tie stronger with me than any bond of blood. It is the holiest relation on earth. Sit down and tell me your trouble, for I see you are in trouble. I divined it before you spoke a word. Have you lost your place?"

Mr. Smith seated himself despondently, leaned his elbows on his knees and took his head between his hands, then answered:

"Yes. But I don't care for that. Places like mine are easily got." He paused awhile, and then raising his head he continued almost fiercely: "I'll trust you anyway, Blowman. I must tell somebody or I'll die."

"You may be certain of me, Smith," responded Mr. Blowman. "I am as true a friend as you have in the world."

"That is saying enough to a poor devil with no friends," said Mr. Smith. "But I'll trust you. You know, Blowman, I have been driving Mr. Williams' delivery wagon for six months past?"

"Yes," assented Mr. Blowman.

"And you know Dolly—I mean, Miss Williams?"

"Yes," again replied Mr. Blowman wonderingly.

"Well, I have seen a great deal of her. I had to go to the house on some errand or other every day, and I took a fancy to her, and joined the Methodist choir where she was singing; and the result has been that I have fallen desperately in love with her, and she with me."

"It's my opinion," interposed Mr. Blowman, "that there is no cause for despondency. She is a fine girl, beautiful, intelligent, cultivated, rich, and all that a man could desire in a wife. And love, in itself considered, is a great blessing, the crowning joy of human life. A heart without love is a very wilderness. I'm convinced, by long observation, that nobility, truth, purity, zeal, fidelity—in short, virtue—can only be looked for in a soul possessed by an absorbing love. It is the fountain which wells all human excellence, and thus I understand those lines of Tennyson:

"'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all."

"Don't interrupt me, please," answered Mr. Smith; "I don't care a pin for Tennyson just now; and when I have told you all you may judge whether I have reason to be glad or sorry. Dolly and I have been confessed lovers for some time. But she is very much afraid of her father's disapproval, so, although I saw her nearly every day, it had to be secretly. Last night, after I left you at the meeting, I went around to see her, and as bad luck would have it, the time went too fast or the meeting broke up too soon, for the first thing we knew her father and Mr. Rousem came through the front gate and caught us sitting in the shadow of a tree in the garden with my arm around her waist. There was no running away. It was bright moonlight, and he knew me before I saw him.

I expected him to fly into a rage and order me off the place, but he did nothing of the sort. He was as cool as if he expected to see me, and said, 'Oh! good evening, Smith. I hope you are well. Daughter, it is rather imprudent for you and Mr. Smith to sit here in the dew; don't you think you had better go into the house? Walk in, Smith.'

"I was considerably taken back, and said, 'Thank you, Mr. Williams, it's rather late, I think I had better be going.' But he said, 'Don't go yet, I beg you, Smith. I'd like to have you make the acquaintance of Mr. Rousem, and have a little music. Do walk in.'

"So in I walked, but horribly uncomfortable. He introduced me to Mr. Rousem as an intimate friend and employe of his, and insisted that Dolly and I should sing some hymns. After awhile, Mr. Rousem retired, and as soon as he was gone Mr. Williams said, 'I am very much surprised and pained, my daughter, to have found you and this gentleman in such a place and posture as I did, and I wish to know what it means.'

"Dolly tried to speak, and burst into tears, so I spoke up: 'It means, Mr. Williams, that we are in love.' He did not look at me at all, but at Dolly, and asked quietly, 'Do I understand, my child, that you are in love with Mr. Smith?'

"Yes, papa," she sobbed.

"'You pain me inexpressibly, daughter,' he said, 'I can hardly believe that you would keep such a thing from me. Now tell me, my dear, frankly, how long has this thing been going on?'

"Miss Dolly was crying too hard to answer, and I said, 'For about three months, sir. Miss Dolly ain't to blame. We met one another all the time at choir-meeting and just fell in love with one another. I didn't mean to say anything to her until I had told

you how I felt, but somehow I couldn't help it, and afterward she was afraid to have me tell you. The blame is all mine if there is any.' Still not looking at me he said:

"'Does this gentleman speak the truth, my child?'

"'Yes,' she answered between her sobs, 'indeed, indeed he does, dear papa. I didn't mean any wrong. I couldn't help loving him, and I know he loves me honestly and truly.'

"'Very well, my darling,' said Mr. Williams, 'I believe you, so to bed now and I will talk the matter over with Mr. Smith.'

"When she was gone, he spoke to me for the first time and said, 'Under these rather unlooked-for circumstances, Mr. Smith, I am naturally somewhat anxious to be better informed about you than I am. Our acquaintance is but a few months old, and I know you merely as an honest cartman with a good voice, qualities that in my judgment hardly fit you to become an aspirant for the hand of my daughter. I must therefore beg you to answer me a few questions.'

"'Certainly sir,' said I.

"'Will you please then tell me something about your family and antecedents?'

"'I have no family,' I answered; 'my mother died when I was a child, and my father was a small farmer in Virginia, who lost all his property during the war and died soon after. If I have any other relatives I know nothing of them.'

"'Humph!' said he; 'well, a married man is expected to support a family. What property have you?'

"'None,' I answered, 'except myself.'

"'What have you in yourself?' he asked, 'have you a profession, trade or occupation? Have you education or character—anything that will serve as capital whereon you may reasonably hope to support my daughter in anything like the station of life which she now occupies?'

"'I have neither profession, trade, education nor character,' I answered. 'I grew up during the war where I could get nothing but a very ordinary common-school education. I was but a boy when my father died, and since then I have earned my living anyhow and anywhere opportunity offered.'

"He paced the floor in silence a few minutes, and then said, 'Then, Mr. Smith, I understand the matter thus: By your own confession you are nothing, and you have nothing. You are a vagabond and an adventurer. You entered my employ, and in a secret and dishonorable manner have contrived to win the affections of my daughter, hoping with her to marry a fortune. I have not words strong enough to express my contempt for you and your conduct. You will please call upon my book-keeper for your wages to-morrow, and I beg that henceforth you will not intrude upon me or my family. Good night, sir,' and he opened the door for me to pass out. What could I say or do? What he said was harsh and unjust, but I felt that it was true from his stand-point. If I were in his place I should, no doubt, think as he does, and should have behaved a good deal worse than he did. But I am not an adventurer nor a sneak, and I love Dolly with all my heart. What shall I do about it, Blowman?"

"Yours is a hard case," said Mr. Blowman, "and illustrates well the old saw about the course of true love. Can you not persuade the lady to run away?"

"Never!" said Mr. Smith, positively, "that would give Mr. Williams good reason to call me an adventurer. Nothing could persuade me to do it, though I never see her again."

"Humph," ejaculated Mr. Blowman, "you are more nice than wise, in my opinion. But let every one stick to his principles; there is nothing like principle as a guide of conduct. However, I see no reason for

despondency. I think I can arrange this business for you. I will go around to see Mr. Williams and talk over the matter with him. There is no reason, as far as I can see, why he should not give you Dolly, and take you into the firm as junior partner, and make everything all right. I think he will listen to reason, and I will go immediately to see him. Come in, about two o'clock, and I will let you know my success."

"Well, just as you say, Blowman," answered Mr. Smith, "but I don't hope for much in that direction."

He did hope, however, in spite of his assertion, and departed with a much lighter heart, while Mr. Blowman betook himself to the residence of Mr. Williams.

A tidy servant-girl answered the bell, from whom, in answer to his inquiry for Mr. Williams, he obtained the information that the gentleman, accompanied by his daughter, had departed for Chicago on the morning train, and that Miss Dolly was to go on to Buffalo to spend some weeks with her aunt. Having learned all that he could in this direction, Mr. Blowman asked for Mr. Rousem, and was shown into the parlor, where he found Mr. Rousem and Dr. Stolid apparently in the midst of a warm discussion. Dr. Stolid looked anything but pleased at the interruption, but the evangelist seemed not a little relieved, and arose to shake hands with Blowman, saying:

"Ah! This is the gentleman who witnessed so good a confession last night. A noble thing, sir! Consider what a power for good your example may prove with the sinners of this city. The sinners, sir! How many wandering feet it may guide from the city of destruction. I am glad to see you, sir, glad to see you." Mr. Blowman, much impressed, humbly remarked:

"I am indebted to you, sir, for whatever good I

have done, as well as for the blessing I have found. You led me to form my resolution to lead a higher life, and I come to you for advice about my future course. I have determined to make a perfect work—to give myself wholly to the Lord's service, and—"

"I rejoice," Mr. Rousem interrupted, "I heartily rejoice to hear this noble resolution—truly noble resolution; make no half-way work of it, sir."

"And," resumed Mr. Blowman, "I desire to obtain your advice how best to begin the work."

"You must excuse me, sir," said Mr. Rousem, "from giving any but the most general advice. I do not assume any blasphemous sacerdotalism" (with a triumphant glance at Mr. Stolid, who winced visibly); "I do not arrogate to myself the divine prerogative of inspecting consciences; I presume not to thrust myself between the soul and his God—his God, sir. I am simply a voice, sir, a voice in the wilderness. My mission is to cry, simply cry, sir; perhaps Dr Stolid can advise you; I will leave you with him; I don't wish to intrude, and I have some business that demands attention. Good morning, sir, God bless you, sir," and Mr. Rousem retired. Dr. Stolid gazed after him a moment with a not altogether angelic expression on his face; but this soon vanished and he turned to Mr. Blowman with a smile, saying:

"I shall be glad to be of any assistance to you, Mr. Blowman. In what particular direction are you in need of advice?" Mr. Blowman was not a little vexed at the retreat of the evangelist, whose advice he particularly wanted; but, seeing nothing else to be done, answered:

'Doctor, I have decided to give the worthless remainder of a misspent life to the service of God, and am persuaded that I have a vocation to preach the gospel."

"Indeed," ejaculated the doctor, in surprise; "but,

my dear sir, it would require a considerable time of preparation to fit you to enter the ministry; and you have, I think, very small means, and quite a large family to support. I do not mean to discourage you, but merely wish you to apprehend the difficulties in the way."

"Yes, sir," answered Mr. Blowman, "but I do not desire to enter the ministry exactly. I thought that I might do service in a humbler sphere as an evangelist."

The doctor sat silent a few moments as though expecting more and then answered:

"I am sorry that I can give your project no encouragement, Mr. Blowman. It cannot be disputed that evangelists do some good in their way. But theirs is a work altogether exceptional and outside the regular field of ministerial labor, and it can only be effectually performed by men of peculiar gifts who are raised up to it by the very special providence of God—with a vocation, in fact, altogether unmistakable. I fear it would be, at least, rash for you to undertake such a work with so little premeditation, and on so sudden an impulse. Search your motives, Mr. Blowman; I fear for them. Since you have asked my advice I venture to recommend that you continue in your present state of life, and show forth by your patience and zealous well-doing the reality of your change of heart, before you attempt to take any higher work upon you."

Mr. Blowman felt mortified, even angry—in fact, snubbed. His first impulse was to swear, but he managed to control it, and contented himself with thanking Dr. Stolid for his kind advice, and took his leave. He felt dejected and thwarted. He had hoped, by the aid of Mr. Rousem, to obtain easy entrance to the pastures that opened so fair before his mental vision. That hope was destroyed, and he perceived

that the entrance he descried was not so easily obtained. Yet he did not give up hope, but walked thoughtfully to his office, revolving the matter in his mind, and sat down to adjust his disordered plans.

This work he had about concluded when Mr. Smith entered, in pursuance of his appointment. He had already learned all that Mr. Blowman had discovered, about the movements of Mr. Williams, and proceeded to narrate it in the sympathizing ears of his friend, concluding with the intimation that he was reduced to such a condition of despair that life was no longer valuable. Mr. Blowman heard him through, and then said:

"Smith, you are a fool. Don't be downhearted, man. Dolly loves you, and you have no reason for despair. You don't doubt her affection, do you?"

"Not at all," answered Mr. Smith.

"Very well, then," continued Mr. Blowman, "that is the main thing. While you are sure of that, you may be sure of everything. In a year or so, she will be of age and can do as she likes; and even if she should refuse to marry you without her father's consent, yet that is not impossible to obtain. There are only three things that he cares for, religion, Miss Dolly and money. He will do a great deal for religion, a good deal more for Miss Dolly, and anything for money. All that you need in order to get his consent to the match is money. So cheer up. I have a plan that will make us both rich in a little while, if you will go into it." As Mr. Smith listened, his face brightened visibly.

"You're right," he said, "things may come out favorably after all; let's have your plan."

"Perhaps you know," continued Mr. Blowman, "that I got religion last night. Well, I have determined to go out and preach the gospel as an evangelist. You shall accompany me as a singer, and we can

make plenty of money, besides doing, what is of more consequence, a world of good."

"I don't see any money in that," remarked Mr. Smith in a disappointed tone, "and besides, I didn't get religion."

"Well, you are not to preach," answered Mr. Blowman, "but to sing; and you do that every Sunday without religion, and there's money in it. Not that I care for the money; I want to do good, and this seems the best way to do it; but *you* want money. Now, suppose we should preach, say twenty nights in every month, with a collection every night. The people crowd to these evangelist meetings, and come down handsomely; so we may fairly suppose that the collections would average forty or fifty dollars a night, but to be moderate let us say twenty. That's your hundred dollars a month—and expenses paid, of course, for we would be entertained and dead-headed everywhere. If, at the worst, we averaged only five dollars a day, you can't make fifty dollars a month clear of expenses in any other way."

"That's a fact," assented Mr. Smith, with rising interest. "Your plan seems reasonable as far as money is concerned. But I don't see how you can put it through. You can't preach, and even if you could, you have no reputation or backing as an evangelist, and nobody here will go out to hear you."

"Don't be afraid," rejoined Mr. Blowman. "Leave the preaching to me. One who feels that love of souls which has now been implanted in my heart can easily find words to express it, and men to hear him. Will you join me? I'll guarantee you against any loss. If you won't go in, say so. If you will, then I will tell you the rest of the plan."

"Yes, I'll go in," answered Mr. Smith. "I'm in for anything now. I don't care much what."

"Well, then," said Mr. Blowman, "that is settled.

Now, of course we can't do anything here. 'A prophet is not without honor save in his own country.' We must go where we are not known; somewhere a long way off. I propose Texas. I have cash enough to take us there, and it will be better for us to adopt some *nom de plume* in order to prevent our friends here from interfering with our success when our names get into the papers. I have concluded to drop the last syllable of my name and call myself Abel Blow, A. B., and you can take any name you like."

In spite of his despair, Mr. Smith laughed no feeble smile, whereat his friend, rather nettled, remarked with hauteur:

"I fail to perceive anything ludicrous in this plan, Mr. Smith. Efforts for the salvation of sinners are not generally calculated to provoke mirth." Mr. Smith checked his laughter, and answered:

"Excuse me, Blowman, I meant no offense, but I think that my name is so common that it is useless to change it."

Mr. Blowman, mollified, resumed:

"There is little more to say except that we must provide ourselves with stylish black suits and white ties to correspond with our occupation. And this is very important for our success, for nothing influences the mass of men like dress, and if you can be ready by that time I think we had better take the late train south to-morrow night."

Said Mr. Smith: "I am with you; but let us have this thing distinctly understood. You are going into it for any reason you choose to say—religion, or doing good, or saving souls, or what not. I am going in for money. I am not religious and don't pretend to be. You must do all the religion, preaching, praying, talking pious, and all that. I am to do nothing but sing. Of course I won't swear, or disgrace you in any other way; but I object to taking a false name. I don't

owe a cent and am free to go where you like if I can do it honestly."

"As for debts," answered Mr. Blowman, "I owe a few hundred dollars; but I shall soon be able to pay that, and as to changing my name I don't see anything out of the way about that, since I do it for a good purpose. By the way, Smith, it won't be necessary to mention our leaving or its object to anybody, and it might have the effect of hindering our pious designs. I shall tell my wife that I have business that takes me to Chicago for a few days."

In such conversation the afternoon wore away and the friends separated for supper with an appointment to meet at the evangelist's meeting that Mr. Smith might have ocular demonstration of the pecuniary possibilities embraced in Mr. Blowman's plan; and as the congregation happened to be large and enthusiastic, he saw enough (in the plates) to persuade him that if they succeeded reasonably well, however few or many souls they might save, they would certainly save enough cash to indemnify them for the labor.

CHAPTER III

WHICH LANDS MR. ABEL BLOW, A. B., WHERE HE WOULD BE, AND MR. JACOB SAMUEL SMITH WHERE HE WOULD NOT BE

The hour agreed upon for their departure having arrived, our two friends were seated side by side in the smoking-car waiting for the starting of the train, when Mr. Blowman, who had been looking out at the car window, arose hastily, and remarking in an undertone: "You don't know where I am, Smith," made a rapid exit. Mr. Smith looked around surprisedly, and just as Mr. Blowman disappeared, one of the principal merchant tailors of the city, accompanied by an officer of the law, came up to the window and looked in.

"Good evening, Smith," he said, "which way?"

"Coming down the road a short distance," answered Mr. Smith evasively.

"Have you seen anything of Blowman?" inquired the tailor.

"Not lately," responded Mr. Smith. "Why?"

"Why?" said the tailor; "I think he is trying to beat me out of a hundred-dollar suit of clothes. He came in while I was out at dinner to-day and bought the finest suit I had in the house, promising the clerk to bring in the money in the morning. I found out that he had been selling off his sewing-machines and everything else salable that he had, for anything he could get in cash, and I believe he is trying to slide out. He won't get away from me, though, if I can

help it." And the irate tailor passed along on his quest, leaving an extremely disgusted sensation with Mr. Smith. While he was doubting whether the tailor had succeeded in apprehending his companion, the train started, and presently Mr. Blowman reappeared and took his seat.

"Did you see Mr. Brown?" inquired Smith. "He was looking for you."

"No, was he?" said Mr. Blowman, "how unlucky I was not to see him. I sold him some machines today and took part of the pay in a suit of clothes. He promised to bring the balance here in time for the train, and I was watching for him, and thought he had failed me I'm vexed not to have seen him, for I wanted the money, but I'll write him to pay it over to my wife."

Mr. Smith scratched his head pensively and said nothing. After a time he lit a pipe and gazed quietly out of a window at the dim moonlit panorama of broad fields and endless fences that danced rapidly before his eyes, while, in his mind, he was trying to fathom the man who was slumbering at his side. Was he a swindler and a rogue, or was he a true Christian inspired by a lofty motive? Should he believe his story or the tailor's? The problem was too much for the not-over-acute intellect of Mr. Smith. He wanted to believe in Mr. Blowman's integrity, so finally he concluded to do so, and disposed himself to imitate his example and sleep, as circumstances allowed.

Nothing worthy of special notice occurred during the tedious days and more tedious nights spent in traveling across the monotonous prairies of Illinois, Missouri, Kansas and the Indian Territory. It would have been highly proper for our companions to have profitably employed their leisure in noting and commenting upon the physical features of the country passed over, considered in its scientific, esthetic, and

economical aspects, the agricultural resources and prospects, and the political conditions and problems of its several sections, for which pursuits their ride gave ample opportunity,. But to the everlasting detriment of future generations, the two companions employed their time in eating, sleeping and smoking, filling up the interval by chatting with such of their fellow passengers as proved affable, and endeavoring to gather from them some definite facts about the religious condition of the promised land—Texas.

The only annoyance that Mr. Blow suffered upon his journey, arose from the attentions of the train boy, that indefatigable human mosquito, which infests the inland routes of travel of the United States. O that some suffering scientist would investigate his natural history! Early in the morning of the first day of his journey this misguided insect selected Mr. Blow as his victim. He presented a box of cigars, "fifteen cents apiece, or two for a quarter." Then followed apples, oranges, nuts, candies, sweetmeats and other tempting edibles. The assault was in vain. To every solicitation, Mr. Blow steadily shook his head. The sagacious tempter paused to consider; he had evidently mistaken his victim's disposition. He regarded the incipient evangelist steadily, from the opposite end of the car. "That traveler must have money. Yes, he is well dressed. He is not weak in the stomach, that is plain. He is a family man; he looks like one; he is on his way home." Having reached this conclusion the mosquito buzzed up to the attack with a box of vegetable ivory trinkets. In vain; then another of Indian bead-work; then another of prize packages, each of which contained a handsome and valuable piece of jewelry. All in vain, and again he contemplates his victim from the end of the car. "Mistaken I am! Must be a literary man." He now descends with papers, magazines and books, the

Police Gazette, the illustrated weeklies, the True story of the Robankil Brothers, Dickens' novels, The Descent of Man; all sorts of literature are one after another skillfully presented to Mr. Blow's consideration. But he considers them not, except to glance at the delicate illustrations of the first mentioned. At last, in despair, the baffled train boy began to gather up the merchandise which he had heaped up beside Mr. Blow and inquired:

"Won't you take any of these, sir?"

"No, thank you."

"Is there anything else you would like to read? I have quite a stock on board."

"No, I thank you."

"Don't you want *something* to read?"

"No, I thank you."

"Well," said the train boy in a loud tone, and with an expression of intense disgust: "Well, I thought you were a reading man;" and departed, leaving his victim sound in pocket, but writhing under an inexpressible sensation of shame and mortification at his exposure before his fellow-passengers as not a reading man.

On the following day, however, kind fortune gave him an opportunity of redeeming his character in this particular. A gray-headed, be-spectacled old gentleman occupied the seat in front of him.

For a while he perused a book that he had taken from his traveling satchel; but presently he dozed off into a nap, and the book fell from his hand. He was suddenly awakened by the brakeman calling out the name of the station at which he wanted to stop, and seizing his satchel he hurried out, forgetting his book. When he was gone, Mr. Blow picked up the book and examined the title page. It read: "Sermons of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, of London, England; Second series." Turning to the table of contents, he found

that it contained some thirty-seven sermons, the last of which fascinated him by its attractive title, "Turn or Burn." He turned to it and began to read. He read it through, and after some reflection read it again and yet again. After an hour or so of diversion, he went back to the work and read another sermon entitled "A Visit to Calvary," then again re-read the charming disquisition on turning or burning. He repeated over and over half aloud the text, "If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow and made it ready." In fact, he began to memorize the sermon, which task, having a good memory, he had pretty well accomplished by nightfall.

This book was quite a godsend to Mr. Blow; without it he might have spent that day in the dullest fashion, for the train was almost deserted, and Mr. Smith sank hourly deeper into the dumps. He ate little, smoked less, and slept scarcely at all, but spent his time gazing fixedly out of the window at the whirling landscape. Not that he was interested in the racing trees or the circling plains; his outward vision was simply a blank, while his occasional deep-drawn sighs showed that his inward vision was not engaged upon a pleasing object. In short, he saw but one object everywhere. On the sides of the cuts, on the grassy plains, on the arching heavens, on woods and waters, was stamped the figure of Dolly Williams, and, with the downcast air and wistful eyes that had last looked upon him from her father's parlor-door, it seemed to be going farther and farther from him, and about to fade into hopeless distance. He was in despair. He mentally anathematized himself time and again, for voluntarily going so far from her, and felt that every mile he traveled was seriously diminishing his chances of ever seeing her again. More than once, he almost made up his mind to get off at the next station and take the first train back—being

restrained from so doing only by the thought of his obligation to his friend, who was defraying his expenses. He voted himself a stupid fool for ever embarking in such an enterprise, which, the more he thought of it, the more he felt sure could only end in disastrous failure, and anyway must put him into the position of a hypocrite and impostor. He pictured to himself the anticipated meetings, the church crowded with pious and anxious souls, longing for the truth and striving after holiness, and imagined himself standing before them on the rostrum, amidst a group of earnest, God-fearing ministers, and singing the songs that meant everything to them, and nothing to him; and the idea filled him with aversion and self-disgust. He would have given anything to be out of it, but what could he do? He was bound to the bargain by the strongest bond that he knew on earth—pecuniary obligation, and he could not go back. Filled with such reflections, the ride to Texas was anything but a pleasant experience for Mr. Smith.

All things come to an end, though, and so, at last, did this journey.

It was a July morning, with a blazing sun staring down at them out of an unwinking Texan sky, when the train which had borne them so far disappeared with a rush and a roar and left them standing upon the station-platform of the city of Dallas. Their immediate care was to take an omnibus, which soon landed them at a hotel, where they at once proceeded to rid themselves of the unavoidable dirt that the unlucky railroad-traveler acquires; to shave, and to array themselves in their heretofore unused evangelistic attire of faultless broadcloth and white ties.

"Do you not think," inquired Mr. Blow of Mr. Smith, "that it would be better to divest yourself of that mustache? It does not look very ministerial." Mr. Smith was standing before the mirror complacent-

ly twisting that facial ornament into two excessively long, slender spirals. It was his darling and his pride; the suggestion of its destruction was more than human nature could endure. He turned sharply on Mr. Blow:

"It was agreed before we started that I was not to do the ministerial. I don't want to look ministerial. I don't intend to pretend to be ministerial in any way. If anything of the sort is necessary, I had better quit now, before I begin!"

"Well, well!" rejoined Mr. Blow, "it's not necessary. Don't be vexed at nothing. It is absurd to talk about quitting now; we have gone too far for that. Hurry up with your dressing. We have no time to lose. We must make arrangements to begin at once, if possible."

"What are you going to do now?" inquired Mr. Smith in a more subdued manner.

"Going," said Mr. Blow, "to call on the most prominent minister of the church in town, and get the use of his building and influence. It will be hard to do anything without him."

'It won't be necessary for me to call, will it?" again inquired Mr. Smith.

"Certainly it will," answered Mr. Blow. "We must impress him with a show of numbers."

Accordingly, having ascertained which was the largest church in the city, and where the minister resided, Messrs. Blow and Smith made their call without delay. They were shown into a neatly furnished parlor, and presently the minister entered. He was a faultlessly dressed little man, with a clean-shaven face, broad, bald forehead and a timid manner. Mr. Blow stepped forward to meet him.

"Do I have the honor of addressing Mr. Difdence?"

"Yes, sir," assented the little man with a smile.

"The pastor of the Methodist church in Dallas?"

"Yes, sir," again assented the smiling little man.

'This meeting affords me very great pleasure, sir," went on Mr. Blow. "I have often heard your name mentioned by the Rev. Mr. Jones, J. Y. Jones, formerly of Maine. Probably you know him, sir?"

"I don't recollect of having met him, sir," hesitatingly answerd the little man.

"He evidently knew you," rejoined Mr. Blow unabashed, "for he frequently spoke of your ability and zeal. But, sir, I neglected to introduce myself; my name is Blow, sir, Abel Blow, A. B. I have the honor to be an evangelist, and to preach of the unsearchable riches of Christ in a most unworthy fashion, but so, sir, as to save some, yes, I trust many, souls. It delights me to know that you are one absorbed in the same holy interest, and I feel honored by your acquaintance" (seizing the little man's hand, and shaking it heartily), "and I hope that we may be able to support one another in the good fight. Allow me to introduce my companion, Mr. Difdence, Smith, Jacob Samuel Smith. Mr. Smith is one whose sweet songs have touched many hearts with the fire of divine love."

Mr. Difdence and Mr. Smith shook hands silently while Mr. Blow continued in a loud tone:

"You may never have heard of us, Mr. Difdence. Our names may be strange to you, for though we have labored long and effectively in the good cause, and turned many souls to righteousness, it has ever been in a modest, quiet way, with no courting of notoriety, with no sounding of trumpets and flaunting of banners. Our field of labor has been chiefly in the North and East, though not without excursions westward, and one or two campaigns in the South. I have long heard of Texas and its gloomy spiritual condition, and often wished to do something to uphold the hands of those who struggle with its wickedness in high places;

and at last I resolved, when I finished my last great meeting in New York—which resulted in over seven thousand conversions—that nothing should keep me longer out of Texas.

Mr. Blow paused to take breath, and remark the effect of his harangue. Mr. Smith was listening with amazed consternation to the story of these unheard-of achievements, but with a studied effort to suppress his feelings, and his eyes fixed on the floor.

Mr. Difdence was gazing on the speaker with growing wonder and respect depicted on every feature.

"Ah, indeed!" he said.

Mr. Blow continued: "I hesitated a long time as to whether it would not be better for me to go right on to Galveston, where I have many influential acquaintances, but finally concluded that it would be wrong to leave unreaped fields behind me, so I determined to stop here and see if I could lend any assistance to the gospel cause in your city. Not that I do not know that it is ably supported in your hands, assisted by those of your brother ministers, but the history of evangelistic effort demonstrates that an experienced and eloquent stranger can reach multitudes that the ordinary ministrations of settled pastors fail to touch. I never, however, allow myself to interfere in the slightest way with the regularly recognized ministry, nor to lift a finger without their consent and approval; though I know their zeal for the salvation of souls too well to suppose that they could discountenance any effort, however humble, to win a sinner to God, and pluck a brand from the burning."

"Of course not," assented the little man gravely.

"Consequently," went on Mr. Blow, "I came at once to you, knowing your commanding position in this community, to beg your permission to testify to the sinners in Dallas the love and mercy of God, and

make an humble effort to gather a few sheaves into the Master's garner. I hope my poor offer may not seem to you utterly worthless."

"I shall be happy to aid you in any way in my power," said Mr. Difdence, "though I fear I can do but little to further you."

"Thank you, thank you," responded Mr. Blow, "you are very good. I expected no less from the good reports I have heard from you. You can do a great deal. You have no objections to allowing us the use of your church for our meetings?"

"I suppose not," said the little man doubtfully.

"I assure you, sir, it will greatly help your congregation," said Mr. Blow confidently. "The churches where our meetings are held often double their membership, though we never preach sectarianism. In fact we belong to no denomination. Charity forbids us to recognize denominational lines. We are all brethren in the church. We will use your church because it is the largest in the city and I would not like any soul to be lost for lack of room. If the other ministers are displeased I shall be very sorry, but I cannot help it."

"Very true, sir," again assented the little man.

"And now, as I am anxious to lose no time, may I ask you to introduce me, this afternoon, to the other ministers of the city, that I may invite their co-operation with your consent; and you will oblige me greatly by putting a notice of the meetings in the daily papers. I think we had better begin to-morrow night, at eight o'clock, say, if that hour suits you; and if we could have a lot of little hand-bills struck off and distributed in the streets with invitations to come to the meetings it might be very useful. I have found it so in many cases, and, by the way, the assistance of your organist, if it could be obtained, would be very valuable." The little man assented to everything. He was taken by storm. He felt as though a strong

hand were laid upon his shoulder and he was forced along to obey the will of a superior being. Mr. Blow's suggestions were commands and his commands were obeyed.

Seeing his entire subserviency, Mr. Blow ventured after awhile to remark on the discomfort of living at a hotel, and intimated a desire to find a private boarding-house. Mr. Difdence took the hint, insisted on entertaining them both, sent straightway to the hotel for their baggage and made himself responsible for the bills which they had contracted there. Indeed he felt that he was richly repaid for so doing, for, under the influence of Mr. Blow's untiring and glowing rhetoric, he began to fancy his congregation already doubled, and its revenues swelled accordingly. The afternoon was spent in visiting the ministers of the city. Introduced by Mr. Difdence, our pilgrims were well received on all sides, Mr. Blow taking good care that no one should know how recent this acquaintance was. No one refused to take part in the meetings, except the rector of the Episcopal church, who received them courteously, but stiffly and promptly declined to take an interest in the proposed movement. At last, well wearied, Mr. Blow and Mr. Smith were alone together, having both been assigned to one bed.

"How in the world, Blowman," said Mr. Smith, "could you tell such magnificent and preposterous lies? I could hardly hold myself while you were talking to Mr. Difdence this morning."

"Excuse me, Smith," rejoined the other, "you must not call me Blowman. My name now is Blow. I have told no lies. A lie is a departure from the truth with the intention of injuring. I have departed from the truth with the pure intention of benefiting. Nothing else would do. If I had told Difdence that we wanted to begin on him, he would have declined.

No one likes to be experimented on. His influence is indispensable, and we have got it and will do good with it. No one can disprove my statements. I have given no names or dates. New York is a large place, and you will see that my seven thousand imaginary converts there will make some real converts here. Can you think the means wrong which secure such good results? I cannot."

Mr. Smith heard, his conscience was appeased, and both slept the sleep of tired nature.

The next morning, the daily papers contained the following announcement:

"The earnest and eloquent Evangelist, Mr. Abel Blow, A. B., assisted by that sweet singer of Israel, Mr. J. S. Smith, will begin a series of Evangelist Meetings at the Methodist church to-night at 8 o'clock.

Let all true lovers of the gospel cause come out and hold the fort!

'Come, drink wine and milk without money and without price.'

Soul-stirring preaching! Heart-moving singing!! Free redemption!!

Salvation, O, Salvation!
The joyful sound proclaim."

Handbills of the same tenor were freely distributed through the city. Evening came, the church was filled, the people flocked in till there was no room left. In due time the evangelist arrived, and, escorted by Mr. Difdence and reluctantly followed by J. S. Smith, with a copy of Gospel Hymns under his arm, was with difficulty marshaled through the crowded aisle and

seated in the post of honor upon the pulpit, platform, supported by two ministers gravely posted on either side. Thus arranged they awaited the opening moment—the people in eager anticipation, the ministers in serious expectation, Mr. Blow in triumphant exultation, and Mr. Smith in uneasy alarm and dejection.

CHAPTER IV

WHICH NARRATES EVENTS PROBABLY WHOLLY UNANTICIPATED BY THE READER

Following the time-honored custom of such histories as this, it would be highly proper to introduce here a narrative relating to the fate of Miss Dolly Williams, or her father, or Mrs. Lucy Blowman, or her children, or Mr. Brown, the tailor, or his business. Something was doubtless happening to one or the other of these at the very moment reached at the the end of the last chapter, which to know is of the greatest importance and interest to the readers of this truthful record. Miss Dolly does not know where her lover is. Mrs. Blowman does not know where her husband is. Mr. Brown does not know where his suit of clothes is.

The narrator, however, neglecting the anxiety and suspense of those three important personages, presumes to break away, at whatever risk, from the venerable custom before mentioned, with utter disdain of chronological order.

Mr. Abel Blow, A. B., is now sitting in the pulpit of the Methodist meeting-house in Dallas, prepared to preach his first sermon. As he and his worthy supporters arranged themselves upon the platform, a lull fell upon the rustling and buzzing of the congregation, and grew deeper and deeper until a profound silence ensued.

Mr. Blow gazed upon the congregation, and the congregation stared fixedly at him. The ministers about him contemplated the floor with staid solem-

nity. Mr. Smith buried his head in his hands in trembling despondency, and the silence continued. All waited expectantly for Mr. Blow to begin, a fact of which that gentleman gradually grew uneasily conscious, but he could not think for his life what he ought to do, so he did nothing, and the silence remained unbroken. After some ten minutes, an impatient hum began to arise from the waiting throng, and the ministers to look toward Mr. Blow with an expression of surprised inquiry. He sat still silent, while an expression of uneasy vexation gradually took, on his face, the place of the former exultant confidence. Five minutes more passed like hours, and some of the most restless, who stood near the door, went out noisily. At this signal, Mr. Difdence bent over and whispered to our hero:

"Brother Blow, don't you think it is nearly time to begin? The people are growing impatient."

"Yes," answered Mr. Blow, also in a whisper, "what shall we do? Ah, I mean, will you please be kind enough to conduct the opening exercises?"

"It's better that you should do it," rejoined Mr. Difdence.

"Impossible!" said Mr. Blow, "I am entirely unaccustomed to these things—that is, I am always used to having a minister open the meetings; please commence." The impatient hum of the congregation rose louder and louder. Mr. Difdence arose to his feet and stepped into the pulpit, where he stood impressively silent, a flush gradually suffusing his face, until quiet was restored. Then he said:

"Dear sisters and brethren, we are assembled here to-night to worship God, and do honor to the coming among us of his most eminent servant and evangelist, the Rev. Abel Blow, who will shortly address you. I earnestly hope you may be both entertained and instructed by the eloquent effort of this justly renowned

and most convincing preacher of the unadulterated truth, and that you will hear him favorably and charitably. He comes to bring us a special outpouring of the Spirit in our midst. Let us then begin the exercises of the evening by praying the Lord of the harvest that some droppings of the showers of blessings that he sends by this powerful champion of the truth may fly like a ray of the sun of righteousness into the darkness of unconverted souls and so wound the hardest conscience that the flood of penitential tears may ascend like incense before the Majesty on high. Let us pray."

Mr. Difdence proceeded to pray in the tenor of his introductory remarks. Then he gave out the hymn, "Am I a Soldier of the Cross," reading the whole of it and directing that three verses should be sung. Mr. Smith, quaking with nervous dread, arose to start the tune, when to his inexpressible relief and the annoyance of the congregation, the organ pealed out and the choir began singing. The hymn finished, one of the ministerial brethren arose at Mr. Difdence's request and read from the Bible, with frequent and lengthy energetical interpolations, the vision of the dry bones, from the Prophet Ezekiel. This exercise lasted about half an hour, to the manifest weariness of the people, and the intense disgust of Mr. Blow, whose confidence had returned, and whose anxiety to perform his part of the exercises he could scarcely contain. Then followed the long prayer by Dr. Upright, who consumed some twenty minutes more, another hymn was sung by the choir, and then the supreme moment arrived. Mr. Difdence said, "Sisters and brethren, I have the honor to introduce to your kind attention the great evangelist, Rev. Abel Blow, who will now address you." Mr. Difdence sat down. Mr. Blow arose; a strange commotion of feelings filled his breast—exultation at the success of his plans—

nervous embarrassment at his unaccustomed position —both these struggled for the mastery.

But, far below these, was an uneasy dread of the deeper consequence of his action. He had accidentally opened the Bible that day to a text that he had never before heard of: "No man taketh his honor upon himself; but he that is called of God as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest."

The words rung in his ears and he was almost ready to descend from the platform with his design unaccomplished. He hesitated, he cleared his throat, he opened the Bible and began to search for the seventh Psalm. After a long time he found it. He could delay no longer; he must speak. He looked at the ceiling and said: "Friends—ah—dear friends: It is with pleasure that I stand before you to-night. I hope that we may be—ah—taught by God's word. You will excuse me if I—a—give out my text. It is found in the seventh chapter of the Psalms of—a—of the book of Psalms.

"If he turn not he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow and made it ready. If the sinner turn not God will whet his sword. So, then, God has a sword, etc." There was no longer any hesitation in Mr. Blow's manner or speech. Confidence returned; the hundreds of eyes before him inspired him; his memory served him well; Mr. Spurgeon's clear-cut thoughts, striking imagery, and living personal appeals flowed from his lips a stream of real eloquence. The vast crowd listened spell-bound. The ministers one after another shifted their positions that they might see his face, and listened with rapt astonishment. Mr. Smith forgot his embarrassment, his self-disgust, his absent love, everything but the sermon. He had never heard such a discourse before, and the same was probably true of every one present. He was

deeply moved; and when, after nearly an hour, Mr. Blow sat down, he stood up almost involuntarily and began to sing, "Sinners, turn, why will you die?"

Mr. Smith had a good voice, and its rich tones, inspired by the emotion behind them, were irresistibly affecting. The whole congregation rose and joined in the hymn, while sobs and groans were heard all over the house. Mr. Blow contemplated the scene with pride, mingled with vexation. He was vexed that his sermon, which he was conscious of having delivered well, had not excited the uncontrollable enthusiasm that was brought out by the music, and his mortification was presently deeper still, for whispering to Mr. Difdence to follow the hymn with a few remarks, that gentleman answered, "No, I would spoil it all, but I see a brother in the congregation who is just the man—I did not know that he was in town—Dr. Holiton—call him up and he will bring out the mourners." When the hymn was concluded Mr. Blow arose and said:

"Will Brother Holiton come forward and address the meeting?"

Thus appealed to, Brother Holiton, a tall, square-set, heavy man, with bushy eyebrows and a large red beard, came slowly and solemnly to the platform, and after facing the congregation for some moments in silence, began:

"Our dear brother has well said that God has a sword," and went on until he had repeated in substance, not in style, the whole of Mr. Blow's borrowed discourse. His language was rough, coarse, often ungrammatical, but in spite of his harsh diction, the effect was almost miraculous. The house resounded with sobs and outcries. "Amen!" "Oh, God!" "Lord, have mercy on me!" "Jesus, save me!" and a thousand other ejaculations interrupted the speaker from all sides. The congregation became terribly excited;

some sprang to their feet, some fell on the floor, some threw themselves on their knees. Every one seemed touched. Mr. Blow contemplated the scene in utter amazement. What was the secret of this man's power? His language was barbarous. He was murdering the sermon. His delivery was simply wretched. As Mr. Blow gazed upon him, now divested of his coat, gesticulating like mad, and literally yelling his words at the top of a powerful voice, he was almost ready to believe that Dr. Holiton was trying to parody his sermon. But the Doctor was evidently in deep earnest, and the congregation too; and there was some unmistakable and wonderful power in Dr. Holiton's address, for even Mr. Smith sat openly sobbing aloud, the tears streaming down his face, and he making no effort to govern or conceal his emotion. Even Mr. Blow himself could hardly resist the contagion of excitement.

The great voice thundered along a few moments in clarion tones, then broke into slower rhythm and dwindled away to a sound almost equally divided between a whisper and a sob. Again it swelled in volume and rose in pitch to its highest point and again sunk away like the lull in a gale of wind, and with it arose and fell almost every heart within the influence of its sound. Mr. Blow was moved in spite of himself by its weird cadences, was angry with himself for being moved, and was confused at the effect produced on the congregation, and moreover vexed beyond measure to see how impotent his own really elegant delivery was beside this sensuous roar. But he felt that Mr. Difdence was right: Dr. Holiton was the very man to bring out the mourners. Before he had concluded, a weeping crowd was kneeling around the pulpit. "Sing," said Dr. Holiton, as he sat down, to Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith arose and with quivering lips and shaking voice began the pathetic song, "Even Me."

"Now," said Mr. Difdence to Mr. Blow, when the song was ended, "don't you think we had better dismiss the congregation and pray with the mourners?"

"Presently," answered Mr. Blow, "I wish to make a few remarks first," and stepping forward he began: "Dear brothers and sisters—Before we part I desire that you should all unite in a practical deed of service to God. I do not speak of my own necessities nor those of my dear Brother Smith. God knows them as well as those of the families who depend upon us. We have freely devoted our lives and property to his service, and spent what we had in traveling to proclaim His blessed gospel. For ourselves, I repeat, I care nothing. God will provide for us and our helpless little ones so long as we faithfully serve Him.

"But I desire a collection to be taken up that all may have an opportunity of showing the earnestness of their hearts. A man's religion is never real till it reaches his pocket. Give to God freely and he will freely give you. Will some brother pass the plates while we sing 'Come to Jesus?'"

Mr. Smith heard these remarks with a feeling akin to disgust, and looked at Mr. Blow with an expression of vexed remonstrance, but Mr. Blow nodded to him coolly and called out, "Sing, Brother Smith." So Brother Smith sang, but not very heartily, while Mr. Blow handed the plates to some gentlemen near the pulpit and started them at the collection, ostentatiously putting a dollar into one of the plates himself, then sidling up to Mr. Smith he said, in an undertone:

"Sing louder, Smith; keep up the excitement; this will pay handsomely. Keep it going till the collection is done."

The collection, in which Mr. Blow took what pains he could that no one should be passed by, not

even the mourners kneeling around the pulpit, was at last concluded, and the evangelist saw with great content that it testified to the existence of a goodly amount of practical piety on the part of the congregation. Then, after a prayer by one of the ministers present, Mr. Blow invited all who preferred "turning to burning" to remain and take the front seats, and all who were desirous of helping on the salvation of souls to stay and pray with the anxious ones. A very large part of the congregation remained in their seats. Several prayers were then offered by different persons at Mr. Blow's request. Some hymns were sung, and twelve of the mourners professed themselves to have experienced religion and found peace in believing. One of these, a forward young man, began to harangue his fellow mourners, and exhort them to come out on the Lord's side, a good deal in the style of Mr. Holiton, and with so much effect that Mr. Smith's tears began to flow afresh, and he sprang to his feet exclaiming:

"Yes! Yes! It is true! The only hope for the poor sinner is in the mercy of God, and the blessed blood of Christ. There is no chance of mercy unless we confess our sins, and turn away from them. I have a word to say that must be said!"

Mr. Blow was struck with horror lest Mr. Smith, in his enthusiasm, should make some confession that would seriously interfere with their success, and sprang to his side crying:

"Say it in song, Brother Smith, say it in song. You speak to the soul; best to sing 'Just as I Am;' and immediately began the song himself though but an indifferent singer. All joined in and Mr. Smith's mouth was stopped for the present and as soon as the song was over Mr. Blow announced that the meeting was at an end for the evening. He at once proceeded expeditiously to transfer the contents of the plates to

his own pockets, and taking Mr. Smith on one arm and Mr. Difdence on the other, said:

"Come, brethren, we need rest to prepare us for our further labors."

"Come, Brother Holiton," said Mr. Difdence, "come and stay with us to-night."

"Yes," said Mr. Blow, "do come; your presence with us this evening was as delightful as it was unexpected. I hope that you may be able to remain throughout the meetings, and lend your able assistance in gathering these precious sheaves."

"I'm sorry," answered Dr. Holiton, "that I can't stay with you to-night, Brother Difdence. Your hospitalities are always agreeable, but I'm bound for Millican by the night-train on big church business. I couldn't stay if Spurgeon himself was to preach (with a meaning glance at Mr. Blow that made him quiver); so good night!" and away went Dr. Holiton toward the depot, and our friends toward the residence of Mr. Difdence.

"You seemed touched to-night," remarked Mr. Blow to Mr. Smith when they were alone.

"Yes, I was," answered the other; "I never in my life felt how guilty a sinner I am, and how hopeless my prospects for the next world. Indeed I never thought much about the next world. What shall I do, Blowman? You are a Christian. You seemed to feel what you preached to-night. What shall I do to get right with God? I feel that there is something wrong about our doing this work. How wicked I am that I could go into it for the prospect of making money out of it. I wanted to tell the congregation all about my wrong-doing. I felt as if every one of them was a saint compared with myself. But I am done with it now. I can't go on in any such hypocrisy." Mr. Blowman paused a moment and then replied:

"Please, Smith, remember not to call me Blowman. From now henceforth I am simply Mr. Blow. I feel for your religious scruples deeply. I am rejoiced that you see your sins and want to be rid of them. But I think you will do very wrong to desert me and our good undertaking now, just when we are beginning to do good. It was wrong, undoubtedly very wrong for you to undertake this holy work in the spirit in which you first entered it. But the work itself is good, and done from a pure desire to serve God. It is the best thing that you can do for him. We have saved twelve souls already, and shall save many more. You have a great talent in this direction and it would be a sin not to use it. But pray be careful to do nothing so rash as to make any public confession of the sort you mentioned. It would ruin our work entirely. Confess to God. He alone can forgive you. Give yourself to Him, and resolve to do this work for no unworthy motive, but for His glory alone. Doing it so we shall both have peace and joy, and I am convinced that He will bless us with provision for our wants, as well as a harvest of souls. I shall be able to support my family, and you will soon save enough to enable you to command Mr. Williams' respect and marry Dolly. We must have collected between fifty and sixty dollars to-night. Dou't you think we had better kneel down and pray over it?" Mr. Smith assented and Mr. Blow offered a long and earnest prayer, after which both retired to rest.

On the following evening the meeting was as crowded as before, but not so enthusiastic. Mr. Blow preached another of Mr. Spurgeon's sermons, "A Visit to Calvary," from St John xix: 5,—a most touching discourse which he had spent the day memorizing, secluding himself for that purpose on the plea of fatigue. He was listened to as before, with the most

rapt attention. His hearers were deeply touched, but not excited. Dr. Holiton was absent. The forward young man was also missing and Mr. Smith's songs, though sung with deep feeling, and backed with the most fervid exhortation that lay in the power of Mr. Difdence and the two other ministers present, failed to awaken any great degree of enthusiasm. The collections were notably less than on the evening before, and were signalized by the noisy departure of a great many of the more illiberal. The mourners did not exceed a dozen, and were all those of the night before, with one exception, a fine-looking young lady dressed in a handsome suit of black silk trimmed with crape, who seemed most deeply affected, sobbing bitterly, and praying aloud for mercy for her sins. Four bore testimony and professed to have found the Savior, and among them was the fine-looking young lady, who made a speech of some length, in which she said that she had been converted four times already, but that she felt that she had rested on a false hope; her experiences had been vain and she had deceived herself; for never had she known the rapturous bliss and sweet peace that now filled her soul. And she exhorted her fellow mourners to give up every effort to do right and to feel right, and just leave it all to the sweet Savior, who would take them for his own.

As Mr. Blow was pocketing the collections, after having dismissed the meeting, the lady came forward and begged the honor of his acquaintance. She introduced herself as Mrs. Weekhart. She was a stranger in Dallas, had been visiting some friends in Fannin county; passing through Dallas on her way home, she had heard of the meetings and resolved to stop over while they lasted, in the hope of obtaining a blessing. Her great delight was attending revivals and camp-meetings; she loved the holy association of souls whom she met in such places. Poor, dear

Mr. Weekhart rather opposed her desires in this regard (tearfully.) He never made a profession of religion, though he always treated ministers of the gospel with respect. Sometimes, indeed, he spoke lightly of religious matters, especially of camp-meetings, but he was not irreligious; he always read the Bible on Sundays, and prayed every day, and he seemed to die in peace, and she hoped he might be saved. Would Mr. Blow and Brother Smith go on to Waxahatchie when they were through in Dallas? She was sure they could do so much good. Her home was there, and she would be delighted to entertain them. A relative of hers was the agent of the stage line, and their expenses would be absolutely nothing, and they might save so many souls. She had experienced a great blessing herself, and was anxious that her friends should share it. Would they come?

Mr. Blow heard her with great interest. He was delighted to know her. He rejoiced in the blessing that she had gained. He hoped that she would persevere more and more. He was anxious to get on to Galveston as soon as possible, but hardly dared to refuse to enter any door that the Lord opened for him. He might be able to go to Waxahatchie. He would see her again about it, and so they parted. The meetings continued for several days, but grew rapidly smaller and less enthusiastic. Mr. Blow preached beautiful sermons and in his best style, but the ministers absented themselves, and the people stayed away, while the contributions dwindled down to comparatively nothing. The same mourners presented themselves night after night, but none were converted. Mr. Blow was inwardly discouraged and Mr. Difdence visibly down-hearted. Sunday came and with it large congregations. Mr. Blow preached morning and night with great fervor. But still the excitement of the first meeting was wanting. Almost

nobody stayed to the anxious meeting. The collections were good and Mr. Blow pocketed them as heretofore. As they came out of the meeting-house after the evening service, the deacon called Mr. Difdence aside and had a long conference in an undertone, the only part of which that reached Messrs. Blow and Smith as they stood waiting for Mr. Difdence, and conversing with Mrs. Weekhart, was the deacon's words rather sharply spoken: "Your fault —strangers—no right—collections—lost."

On the way home Mr. Difdence was silent and abstracted, Mr. Blow was talkative and jubilant and Mr. Smith puzzled and disconcerted.

After they were seated in Mr. Difdence's neat little parlor, that gentleman, having several times begun to say something and abruptly broken off, at last asked Mr. Smith if he would kindly retire, as he wished to have a private talk with Mr. Blow. Mr. Blow remarked that he had no secrets from his dear Brother Smith. But the latter retired, nevertheless. Being alone with Mr. Blow, Mr. Difdence, with reddening face and downcast eyes, said:

"I hope you will excuse me, my dear friend, but—pray, do not be offended, but—"

"Certainly not, certainly not," interrupted Mr. Blow calmly. "It is impossible for me to take offense at anything you may have to say."

"It is very painful for me to have to say it," continued Mr. Difdence, truthfully, "and I hope you will not be vexed, but the fact is, Mr. Countmuny, the deacon of my congregation, thinks that as the regular Sunday collections are a part of the usual revenue of the church, that they should go into the hands of the treasurer of the congregation."

"Very true," assented Mr. Blow, putting his hands into his pockets, "I see no reasonable objection to that theory." Mr. Difdence waited expectantly a

moment, but as Mr. Blow's hands still remained in his pockets, he continued hesitatingly, still growing redder in the face:

"Mr. Countmuny is a man of very methodical habits, and finding the money gone when he went as usual to empty the plates to-day, he was rather unreasonably, I thought, vexed with me."

"Very unreasonably," answered Mr. Blow, settling his hands deeper into his pockets, "very reprehensible of Mr. Countmuny, in my opinion."

Again Mr. Difdence waited in vain for some motion of Mr. Blow's hands, but, seeing none, he went on with a strong effort, his face red as fire and as hot:

"And Mr. Countmuny insisted that I—that I should ask you for the money—"

"Is it possible," exclaimed Mr. Blow in a sympathizing tone, "that he could be guilty of such impertinence! I wonder that you could restrain your anger." A long and awkward pause ensued, broken at last by Mr. Difdence, who, with a painful struggle and an uneasy change of posture, remarked:

"I hardly feel, Brother Blow, that Mr. Countmuny is altogether wrong."

"Indeed," answered Mr. Blow promptly and easily, "you are greatly mistaken then; consider the matter a moment. I grant of course that all the regular collections of your church belong to the church revenues, but the collections taken to-day are not of that character as appears for several reasons. In the first place, you voluntarily tendered me the use of the church for my meetings, which was very kind of you and I appreciate it highly, but it necessarily put your own meetings in abeyance, as making me the pastor for the time being. Secondly: the congregations were not your regular congregations. Most of your people were probably there, but the great majority came solely to hear me preach. Thirdly: all the

good people who contributed gave their money for a special object. I took pains to have it distinctly understood at our first meeting that the collections were to be applied to defray the expenses of myself and Brother Smith. To allow them now to take any other direction would be equivalent to an abuse of trust, of which crime I trust neither you nor I would be guilty. As it is, they are altogether insufficient to meet the expenses that we have incurred in coming to Dallas; but that is a matter of no consequence. I never count the cost of my efforts to do good."

"You are right," rejoined Mr. Didfence with a dejected air, "I see you are right. I wonder that I did not see the matter so before, and I beg your pardon for mentioning the disagreeable subject. I hope you won't take offense."

"Of course not," said Mr. Blow cheerfully; "I am glad you spoke of it, for I should be sorry to leave any wrong impressions behind me. Good night, sir. You must be tired."

CHAPTER V

WHICH PURSUES THE THREAD OF OUR STORY THROUGH SEVERAL IMPORTANT AMD ENTERTAINING EPISODES

It began to be rumored in Aurora that Mr. Blowman, the sewing-machine agent and bill-poster, had absconded, and that for some unaccountable reason the delivery cartman of P. Williams & Cp. was gone with him. Some, however, affirmed that the cartman of P. Williams & Co. had eloped with his employer's daughter, and that Mr. Williams had taken the bill-poster and gone in hot pursuit. One lady affirmed that she was in Chicago when the chase passed through; that as she was entering one of the principal hotels a close carriage drove rapidly away from the door with a gentleman inside and a lady who, as well as she could see through the window, and a carefully drawn veil, closely resembled Miss Dolly Williams. The gentleman she saw plainly, and as she did not know him at all he might have been Mr. Smith, whom she could not remember ever having seen; and moreover, she had seen in the register with her own eyes the entry of "S. S. Jacobs and wife, St. Louis," and the chambermaid told her that they were a loving young couple, who arrived at the hotel the day before, left that day (on which she saw the carriage drive off) in great haste to catch the train for Niagara. Now it was plain that S. S. Jacobs was a false entry for Jacob S. Smith; and moreover, about two hours after these occurrences she positively

saw Mr. Williams enter the hotel with a man who looked like Mr. Blowman, as well as she could remember him, and, in a few moments, the two had come out again and driven off in a carriage in a direction opposite to that taken by the first carriage. All of these things convinced her that the elopement theory was a true one.

Mr. Brown, the tailor, affirmed that this hypothesis was untenable, for Mr. Blowman and Mr. Smith had been seen together in town the day after Mr. and Miss Williams' departure; nor would he believe that Mr. Blowman and Mr. Smith had gone together, or knew anything about each other's movements, for he had seen Mr. Smith on the train the night he started and had convinced himself that Mr. Blowman was not aboard that train.

Mr. Smith, he thought, had gone elsewhere to seek employment, and Mr. Blowman had fled perhaps to Canada; he wished it might be to—Halifax. Mrs. Blowman, sad and perplexed, when asked her opinion, was certain that Mr. Blowman had gone to Chicago on important business, and would return, without fail, in a week at latest. Several times, it had been necessary for him to make the same trip, and she didn't see why his absence should occasion any talk. She *knew* that it had nothing to do with the disappearance of Mr. Smith or Mr. Williams or Miss Dolly or anybody else. Mr. Blowman's whole attention was absorbed in his own business, and his whole heart was centered in his home. Mr. Brown was fain to believe her, and asked if Mr. Blowman had left any directions about paying for a suit of clothes that he bought on the day of his departure. Mrs. Blowman, with some asperity, assured the tailor that Mr. Blowman was in the habit of paying his honest debts honestly; that if he (Mr. Brown) had sold him a suit of clothes, of which transaction she knew nothing,

the payment for the same would be forthcoming in due time.

So Mr. Brown, as there was nothing else to do, bottled up his impatience and returned to his shop to await, rather doubtfully, Mr. Blowman's return. On the whole, the elopement theory was not popular with the ladies. The gentlemen, those who gave it a thought, concluded that Mr. Blowman had forsaken his family, and absconded, which opinion became more general, and settled into certainty as time elapsed and no Blowman appeared; and as for Mr. Smith they simply did not know where he was, and few cared.

So matters stood when Mr. Williams, after an absence of about a week, reached home again. He had not been in town twelve hours before Dr. Stolid put him in possession of all the facts and theories that were being discussed. Mr. Williams laughed uneasily at the story of the elopement, and said that he could not understand how any one dared presume to connect his daughter's name with that of his late employe; that Miss Dolly was gone to visit her aunt for the sake of a change of air; and as for Smith, he had grown very remiss in his duties, and also given some ground for suspicion of his honesty, and consequently been discharged. He (Williams) knew nothing of him; very probably he was spending the remnant of his wages on a spree somewhere; of Blowman's whereabouts Williams could tell nothing, but thought that he would turn up soon. Dr. Stolid departed leaving Mr. Williams in a very perturbed state of mind. He sat down to reflect about the matter. It was not unlikely that Mr. Blowman had absconded; his business seemed very small and he was heavily in debt. Mr. Williams took down his ledger. It showed a balance of $173.36 against Mr. Blowman. Mr. Williams thought that he could easily afford to lose that sum,

if only Mr. Blowman had taken Smith with him to parts unknown. At the same time he called his book-keeper, and told him to make out that bill at once and bring it to him. But perhaps Mr. Blowman was not accompanied in his flight by Mr. Smith. He could think of no possible reason that would induce Mr. Smith to go to Chicago in such company. Suppose the latter had discovered what he had done with his daughter and followed them. Even now the scoundrel might be making love to his cherished child. His sister was an indiscreet woman and would probably encourage the match. Mr. Williams started to his feet and walked nervously up and down his office. Presently the book-keeper brought in the ordered bill. He put it in his pocket, and started in the direction of Mr. Blowman's house.

Mrs. Blowman did not know whether to be alarmed or pleased by a visit from the magnate, and seated herself respectfully opposite to him.

"Mr. Blowman is out of town, I believe, madam?"

"Yes, sir."

"He has been gone some time?"

"About a week, sir."

"I suppose you know when he will return?"

"Not exactly, sir. He merely said that his business would take him to Chicago for a few days, and that if any one wanted him in his absence, to say that he would be back in a short time."

"Do you know whether he went alone?"

"Yes, sir, I'm sure he did. I believe it has been said that he went with Mr. Smith, who used to work for you, sir, but Mr. Brown says that he saw Mr. Smith in a south-bound train the very night that Mr. Blowman went to Chicago. So they were not together."

"Can you give me Mr. Blowman's address in Chicago?"

"No, sir, I really can't. I never have occasion to write to him when he is away, and I don't know where he stays."

"Well, I thank you, madam. I merely wanted to speak to Mr. Blowman about a little bill I have against him. It has been running several months and I shall be forced to refuse him any more credit until it is paid."

Mrs. B. looked anxious and her eyes began to grow red. "I hope, sir, you will not stop our credit until Mr. Blowman returns. He has not left me any money, and I am sure he will pay the bill just as soon as he gets back."

"It has been running too long as it is," said Mr. Williams sharply, rising to his feet. "I never allow over thirty days' credit, and this bill is five months old. When it is paid, I may allow you to make another—not before. Here it is, madam, one hundred and seventy-three dollars and thirty-six cents. I want the money immediately and must have it. Good morning, madam." And Mr. Williams stalked majestically out, leaving the sad-faced woman holding the bill before her face; but her eyes were too full of tears to permit her seeing it. Mr. Williams went straight to the telegraph office and sent this dispatch to his daughter:

"Come home by the first train.

"P. WILLIAMS."

The window of the chamber which Miss Dolly occupied in her aunt's house in Buffalo commanded a fine prospect of Lake Erie. In this window sat Miss Dolly gazing out at the sparkling water. Her round, childish face had grown, in the few days that had elapsed since she left her home, more mature than one would have thought possible in twice as many years. Her eyes were red and swollen, her hair dis-

arranged, her dress negligently put on, and frequent sighs of deep unrest followed one another from her heart. Thus her aunt found her when she entered hastily. "Now don't be frightened, child. Here's a telegram for you," she said, and put the message into her hand.

Miss Dolly hastily tore open the envelope and glanced at the contents. For a moment she gazed at it like one dazed, while all the color left her face; then she laid her head on the window-sill and burst into a violent fit of tears.

"Don't cry, Dolly, don't cry so, dear," said her aunt, in a pitiful tone, her own voice shaking as she kneeled by Dolly's side, and threw her arms around her. "Pray don't break your heart; I don't believe it is anything serious. Philip is not hurt or sick; he only finds it lonesome without you; and I know how solitary he must feel, for I shall be lost when you are gone. So don't alarm and worry yourself without cause. You will wear yourself completely out, and you need all your strength for your tiresome journey. Do be calm."

But Dolly, taking no note of any effort to comfort her, sobbed as though her heart would break indeed.

Finally just as her aunt was thinking seriously of sending for a physician, Dolly sobbed out: "Oh, I'm so glad, Auntie, I'm so glad that I can't help crying. I'm so happy; I know he means to consent, or he never would have sent for me. He has found out something more about him, and he means to consent. I know he means to consent! I'll tell you all about it, but I can't now. Please go away, Auntie dear, I'll be quiet soon."

So the aunt left her, and when she came back in half an hour to remind Miss Dolly that the first train left in a few hours, and there was scant time for preparation, she found her already engaged

in packing her trunks, with a face wet still with tears, but as radiant as the sun. While they were engaged in packing, Miss Dolly confided to her aunt the story of her love, and its unhappy end. "But," she added, "I knew papa would relent when he knew more of Mr. Smith. I felt sure that when he found how true, and noble, and generous, and pure, and high-minded he is, he would be glad to let me marry him. He said that I should never mention his name again; that if I spoke to him he would disown me forever; but he did not know him. He has found out something about him now, and he is going to consent. I feel sure of it, for he said I should stay here a long while; that it would be easier for me to forget here."

Her aunt listened sympathetically, but she knew her brother's character too well to suppose that Miss Dolly's theory could be correct, unless it had transpired that her lover was a millionaire who had been courting her in the disguise of a cartman, to be sure of her affection.

She feared that some accident or sickness had befallen her brother and made Miss Dolly's presence necessary to his comfort. She contented herself, however, with merely hinting to her niece that she might be mistaken, as there was possibly another reason behind the telegram than she had supposed—that wishes often govern judgments. But Miss Dolly promptly rejected the suggestion. She was right, she knew she was. Just at this juncture a servant entered with a card bearing in beautiful caligraphy the name, Horace T. Winters; she presented it to Miss Dolly, who dropped it indifferently and said: "Tell him I can't see him; I am engaged."

"Who is it?" queried her aunt.

"That horrid Mr. Winters."

"You had better see him."

"No, Auntie, I can't. I'm not dressed and my eyes are red, and I have scarcely time to finish packing; and besides I don't like his coming here so often. He has been here nearly every day since I arrived, and I don't like him and don't want to see him."

"But your father would not be pleased to know you treated the young man so rudely. He and old Mr. Winters are great friends. They used to be partners in business before he moved west."

"Please, Auntie, I can't see him," persisted Miss Dolly. "Go down, Jane, and tell him that I am very busy and he must excuse me."

"No," said her aunt, "don't send so brusque a message at any rate. I will go down and explain matters myself."

Mr. Winters was a young gentleman of some one or two and twenty, with a love of a little mustache just curling over his lip, a suit of most faultlessly fitting clothes, and a gold-headed cane of delicate proportions. He heard of Miss Dolly's sudden departure with an easy expression of polite concern. Hoped that it denoted nothing serious at home. Would be glad to be of service in any imaginable way; made a correct adieu and departed.

When Miss Dolly arrived at the depot, by mere accident it happened that he was at hand to assist her out of the carriage, to escort her to the waiting-room, check her trunks, buy her ticket, secure her a place in the sleeping-car, see her safely aboard the train, and wish her *bon voyage*—all in the most kindly, indifferent manner possible. The train was hardly started when Miss Dolly discovered that Mr. Winters had forgotten to give her her checks. She was in despair for a time, but nothing could long dampen her spirits, and she comforted herself with the reflection that her father, who knew all about these things, would have no trouble in finding the

trunks, and resigned herself to the happy contemplation of the bliss toward which she was journeying. Nothing worthy of note occurred until she reached Chicago, where, as she was leaving the train to change cars, she was surprised to see, standing ready to hand her off the platform, Mr. Horace T. Winters.

"Why, Mr. Winters," she said as she stepped down, "how did you get here? I did not know you were on the train. Did you know that you forgot to give me my checks in Buffalo?"

"Ah, yes, so I did! How stupid of me! Here they are, though. You will find them all right when you get home. Seeing that I had neglected to hand them to you I got the trunks transferred to the C. B. & Q. to save you the trouble. This is your train. No, you had better take the next car. The fact is, father wanted me to come west to attend to a little business. I did not say anything about it because you know one can't smoke comfortably in the sleeping-car. Will you allow me to get your ticket? To Aurora? Thank you. I'll bring it to you in an instant." Mr. Winters disappeared and she did not see him again till just as the train was starting he appeared at the window, handed in her purse and ticket, said good-bye with a polite bow, and the train was off.

Miss Dolly was sadly disappointed when she reached home that her father said not a word about Mr. Smith. He met her at the depot, seemed delighted to see her, asked after her health and her aunt, and her journey. Miss Dolly answered his inquiries satisfactorily, and told him of the care that Mr. Winters had taken for her comfort.

"What Mr. Winters?" said her father. "J. P. Winters, my old friend? It can't be, or he would have taken you more under his protection."

"It was his son, I think," said Miss Dolly.

"What, Horace? Yes, Horace must be pretty well grown now. I have not seen him for some years. You asked him to come and spend some days with us before he returned east?" Miss Dolly confessed that she had not, whereat Mr. Williams declared himself quite vexed, and said:

"Mr. Winters is one of my dearest and most intimate friends, and I should have liked to show Horace the greatest attention. You two were promised to each other, Miss, while you were both babies, and nothing would please me more than to see the promise fulfilled. I am very sorry that you did not ask Horace to stay awhile with us."

Miss Dolly heard these words with great pain, and at last ventured timidly to ask her father why he had sent for her so unexpectedly. He answered:

"Because I missed my little housekeeper so dreadfully. It is desperately lonesome here with you away. I could hardly muster courage to go home to dinner," and Mr. Williams kissed her, bade her get rested and refreshed, and went off to his business.

Not a word about the subject that lay closest to her heart. She began to feel that possibly she had been mistaken, and the thought brought tears to her eyes. But she would not give up hope yet. At any rate she was near *him*, and could see him at times, if it were only a passing glance, and she began to watch for opportunities. Ere long, however, this hope was dispelled. Mrs. Grundy called.

"How glad I am to see you, child. You made a very short visit. You don't look very well. It is very fortunate you are returned so soon. We will put a stop to the scandalous talk that is afloat. Of course you know that everybody says that you eloped with your father's cartman, Smith. I didn't believe it; of course I know you have too much good

sense to think of such a creature. The idea! How could anybody presume so! I suppose it was because he was so attentive to you in the choir and always escorted you back and forth to the meetings. Perfectly natural, certainly. He was your servant, so to speak. But people will talk without the slightest foundation. You don't know where Mr. Smith is? To be sure not! It is curious that he should disappear just at the very time that you started off for your trip east. And what Mr. Blowman has to do with the matter is a mystery to me. Yes, they are both gone and nobody knows where. They went—I think it was the very night that you started east. But whether they went together or not, nobody knows. Really, the mystery is quite delightful. Mr. Blowman has left his family in absolute want. Poor little Mrs. Blowman came to me to-day to beg for work, sewing or something But I had none to give her. She said that Mr. Blowman had not left her a cent of money, and that your father refused to give her any more credit, and that the other storekeepers would not trust her, and she did not know how she could get along until Mr. Blowman gets back. She is quite positive he will come in a very little while, but she is afraid some accident has happened to him. But he never will come back. He is tired of her and has left her and swindled his creditors and run away. It's no use to hope that I am mistaken, I am not. I never am. But what share Mr. Smith has in the matter I cannot guess. Well, I must go. Good-bye, dear, I'm sorry you were not well while away. Come and see me soon, love. Good-bye."

Miss Dolly was too prudent to betray any great interest in Mrs. Grundy's facts and opinions, but she felt a very deep one. So Mr. Smith was gone, and that was why her father sent for her, and nobody knew where he was. Both he and Mr. Blowman

were possibly together. May be Mrs. Blowman had heard something from her husband by this time. She did not believe that any man could be so utterly bad as to forsake entirely his wife and children. She would go to see Mrs. Blowman at once. She ran to see if there was time before dinner to execute this plan. But before she could get ready, in came her father and with him Mr. Horace T. Winters. He had had business in Aurora. He could not resist the temptation of Mr. Williams' invitation to stay a few days. The prospect of seeing Miss Dolly was too strong for him. He hoped he would not be in her way. Miss Dolly's visit had to be postponed, but it was made the next morning with Mr. Winters for a companion, and a bundle of sewing for an excuse. We know already how much information she gained.

CHAPTER VI

WHICH CONTAINS WHAT THE READER WILL PERUSE

Monday evening arrived, and Mr. Difdence, who had been in a gloomy frame of mind all day—especially so after the call made in the morning by Deacon Countmuny—declared (in answer to Mr. Blow's suggestion that the hour of service had nearly arrived) that he could not go to church that night. So Mr. Blow set off in company with Mr. Smith and Mrs. Weekhart, who had called early in the afternoon to press upon Mr. Blow her invitation to Waxahatchie. To their great surprise, they found, on reaching the church, that it was unlighted and the doors closed. After waiting a short time for the sexton, Mr. Blow managed to open one of the windows, entered and unbolted the doors, and as both gentlemen were provided with matches the lamps were soon burning, much to the satisfaction of Mrs. Weekhart, who, while denouncing the occasion for it, loudly professed her admiration of the zeal which stopped at no difficulties in the way of salvation.

When the lamps were lit they sat down to wait for the congregation. A few people had already come in, and shortly a few more arrived, not more than twenty in all. They waited some time for more, when Mrs. Weekhart observed that she feared the congregation would be small.

"Yes," returned Mr. Blow with a deep sigh. "Yes, I fear the day of grace for Dallas is past. It is evidently stony ground. The seed flourished boldly at

first, and gave brilliant promise: but how quickly it withered away!" and he shook his head sorrowfully. Mrs. Weekhart said:

"I am sure that it will not be so in Waxahatchie."

"I hope not," answered Mr. Blow, "I hope not for the good of their souls. Well," he continued, "the Lord saveth not by many or by few. We will hold a prayer-meeting. Perhaps we may gain a blessing at the eleventh hour."

So he requested those present to take the front seats, which they did not do. Offered a prayer, read a chapter of the Bible, selected at random, requested others to offer prayer, which none would do except Mrs. Weekhart and Mr. Smith, who both prayed fervently. Even the collection was not favorably received, none of those present being willing to pass the plates; consequently, Mr. Blow was forced to do so himself, and, in his righteous indignation, he dismissed the meeting with some strong words about the fate of those who despised the offer of divine mercy, and hardened their hearts against the means of grace, announcing, also, that the meetings would be discontinued, as he was forced by urgent appeals to go to others who would hear and heed his words.

As they escorted Mrs. Weekhart to her hotel, Mr. Blow told her that he had concluded to accept her invitation, and go with her to Waxahatchie by the first stage, which, as good luck would have it, left the next morning. She thanked him a thousand times, and gratefully promised to arrange all the preliminaries, and have the stage call for them, as the stage-office was at the hotel where she was staying. As they walked home Mr. Blow said to Mr. Smith:

"I think, Smith, that we have done all that we can here. This is evidently a hardened and money-seeking community. Even Difdence, whom I did not suspect of such a fault, is evidently under the same

baleful influence. He values a little money before many souls. I have no doubt that the church was shut against us to-night and unlighted according to his orders." And then he repeated the conversation he had had with Mr. Difdence, the night before.

Mr. Smith made no answer.. He did not doubt Mr. Blow's consicentious motives, nor question the correctness, of his opinions, nor his purity of purpose. He thought it right that Mr. Blow should take the collections, even though it might be, as it seemed likely to be in the end, out of Mr. Difdence's pocket. But for Mr. Difdence he entertained a profound pity. As was easily to be seen from his surroundings and style of living, that worthy man did not revel in a superfluity of this world's goods, and Mr. Smith even felt that he was scarcely to blame, if, on finding that the meetings were likely to cost him a goodly amount, he had taken measures to bring them to an end by closing the church against them.

Of this act, however, Mr. Difdence was really guiltless—indeed, ignorant. It was the work of the Deacon, who had told the sexton that whatever oil might be consumed at these meetings he, the sexton, should pay for, and had moreover pocketed the key of the church, declaring that Mr. Difdence had no right to allow any one to use it without his consent. And he had spent the day visiting members of the congregation, and talking on the streets, endeavoring to dissuade all from attending the meetings. He had determined to put a stop to them, and being a man of great influence in town, carried his point, as we have seen. When our friends arrived at Mr. Difdence's house the family had retired, so they made their way to their room as best they could.

Mr. Blow now produced a package of money and an account-book. He counted the money, being all that they had collected in Dallas, and entered it up

in the book. Then turning to Mr. Smith he said, 'Now that we have concluded the first venture of this enterprise, I think we had better divide the earnings."

"Just as you think best."

"Very well. Here (pointing to the book) is the gross amount, $154.20, and not a bad sum either for a beginning. Now I think that it is but fair that our expenses be charged against that, and the net balance declared a dividend. You have no objection to that?"

"Certainly not, if you think it right."

"Certainly; I have kept a careful account. Here it is on this page, $103.10; (writing) Creditor by cash expense, 103.10. That leaves a balance of $51.10 to be divided; (writing again) Creditor by cash dividend to J. S. Smith. $25.55. Creditor by cash dividend to Abel Blow, A. B., $25.55; 154.20—154.20. There! that is all straight. Here's your money. Twenty-five dollars and over for little over a week's work, and not very hard work at that, is not bad pay."

"We have not been here a week."

"That's so! Well, that's better yet; and after this we shall do still better, for it will all be net gain nearly. Our expenses from now on won't amount to much. Don't you see I was right when I told you this sort of thing would pay?"

"Judging, though, from Mr. Difdence and the other ministers I have met, preaching don't pay very well in general."

"Oh! That's very different—that's very different! Your regular ministers, as a rule, are not well paid. Here and there in the large cities you find one who gets a good salary—as much perhaps as a good book-keeper, or a first-rate salesman. But the vast majority in little places hardly get enough to keep body and soul together, and they have to beg almost for

that, and be trampled on and browbeaten all the time, by one or more members of their congregation. Here's Difdence, for example, I warrant that he gets only about five hundred a year—six at the outside—and see how he is run over by this Deacon Countmuny! There's Dr. Stolid, in Aurora: He gets seven hundred, and Williams (Mr. Smith winced at the name) lords it over him like a king. The ministry is not a money-making profession; that is certain. But then the case is different. They have to stay in the same place, and keep the thing going whether the people give or not. Enthusiasm or no enthusiasm, money or no money, it's all the same. We go in, stir things up, and as long as the excitement lasts we reap; while people give, we take; when they get tired of it, we go. We get the money, and the glory, and do good, too. But, after all, the ministers do the work that tells in the long run. They are as necessary in their sphere, I suppose, as we are in ours. Ah! Smith, this is a glorious work. I don't know when I have been so happy as I was at our first meeting here, when I saw the first fruits of my labors, and felt that precious souls were saved." Mr. Smith assented with a sigh. The last few days had raised Mr. Blow wonderfully in his estimation. The earnestness and beauty of his sermons, the piety of his conversation, his apparent zeal to do good, coupled with his own recently stirred religious feelings, all combined to make honest J. S. Smith view his companion with a feeling akin to reverence.

Morning came, and with it the stage, Mrs. Weekhart being inside, and also a quiet, middle-aged gentleman who wore a vest buttoning up close to his throat, and displayed no shirt or collar except a smooth, narrow linen band around his neck.

Messrs. Blow and Smith made their adieus to Mr. Difdence and his family, climbed into the stage and

started, but not till Mr. Smith had called Mr. Difdence aside and handed him twenty dollars. Mr. Difdence with the money in his hand refused to keep it. He felt grieved that his hospitality was thus misunderstood. Mr. Smith assured him that it was not intended as a payment for anything. That he feared there might be some little expenses of lights or something that they had overlooked and which would be heavy upon Mr. Difdence, with a large family to support. Mr. Difdence thanked him for his consideration, but repeated that he could not keep the money. He kept it nevertheless, for Mr. Smith turned away and got hastily into the stage, and they drove off.

It was a beautiful day, clear and bright, and the midsummer heat was tempered by a strong, cool breeze from the south-east. The road lay mostly across an open prairie, which after they had passed a little distance from the city was unbroken by fence or plow and stretched its undulations of virgin pasturage far away to the horizon. It was absolutely untenanted except by herds of cattle here and there, which gave a delightfully pastoral character to the landscape. Mr. Blow and his companion had never seen anything of the sort, and were delighted with it, breaking out every now and then into rhapsodies of admiration, wondering why so delightful a land should remain so deserted. The conversation for a long while remained with them, and Mrs. Weekhart, who displayed, upon every possible occasion, a desire to give it a religious turn not at all relished by Mr. Blow. The closely buttoned-up stranger made never an observation, but endeavored, as well as the occasional lurching of the stage permitted, to read a book which he produced from his pocket. Mr. Blow eyed him furtively from time to time, and at last determined to draw him into a conversation.

"Traveling, sir?" he remarked.

"Yes, sir," said the stranger in a pleasant voice, just glancing up from his book.

"Are you going far?"

"Not very."

"Do you live in this part of the country?"

"Yes, sir."

"In Dallas, perhaps?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are you a native of Texas?"

"No, sir."

"You have traveled this road before, I presume."

"Several times," still trying to read.

"On business, I suppose."

"Yes, sir."

"Can you tell me the name of this tree that grows in clumps over the prairie?"

"Mesquite."

"It looks quite like a peach tree at some little distance."

No answer. Mr. Blow paused a moment and renewed the attack.

"Merchant, sir?"

"No, sir."

"Traveling salesman, perhaps?"

"No, sir."

"You may be a physician and have patients this way?"

"No, sir."

Another pause, then Mr. Blow remarked:

"An interesting book you have, sir." The stranger looked annoyed.

"Yes, sir. A Bible."

"Ah, perhaps you are a minister; if so I would be glad of your acquaintance, as I follow the same profession. I am the evangelist who has just concluded a series of meetings in Dallas."

"Indeed, sir."

"What church do you belong to?"

"I am a priest of the Episcopal Church, sir, at your service."

"You Episcopals are rather exclusive, are you not?"

The stranger put the book into his pocket and answered resignedly:

"I think not, sir."

"Yes, sir" (magisterially). "I have always been told so. And I have evidence which puts the matter beyond doubt. The Episcopal minister in Dallas absolutely refused to take part in my revival meetings; and now that I remember, I believe you are the same man."

"I believe I am. But possibly I may have had another reason than exclusiveness; I do not remember assigning that."

After a pause, Mr. Blow resumed aggressively: "I consider your church very formal. You say your prayers out of a book; this is entirely unscriptural; and moreover, as a body you are lacking in vital piety. You don't believe in conversion, and I have been credibly informed that not one in ten of your ministers has ever been truly converted. I hope you have experienced religion" (benevolently).

"I trust so," meekly answered the stranger. "By the way, will you please point out some of the extempore prayers in Scripture?"

"I do not know that I remember any just now, but there are plenty."

"Yes, plenty of prayers. There's Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple; but that is evidently precomposed. There are a great many prayers of David; but they are in meter, and plainly written beforehand. The Temple service is admitted by all to have been strictly liturgical. The Lord's Prayer is a form which he commands us to use. The publican's prayer is clearly the response of a litany. 'The

prayers of the church,' Acts ii: 42, must mean a form of worship—and—ah, yes, I had almost forgotten—the Pharisee's prayer. You remember it: 'Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as other men,' etc. I have no doubt that was entirely extempore."

Mr. Blow looked annoyed, and said, "I feel sure that there are many extempore prayers in the Bible."

"I would be grateful to have them pointed out. Here is a Bible." Mr. Blow declined the offered book.

"It is just as well," said the stranger, putting the book into his pocket again. "I fear your search would be useless. What do you understand by the Kingdom of Heaven, spoken of so often by our Lord Jesus?"

"Why, heaven, of course."

"Not at all 'of course.' In the Parable of the Tares the Lord says expressly, 'the field is the world.' Is heaven then in the world?"

"I suppose sometimes the Kingdom of Heaven means the church."

"Exactly. I think so too, but why 'sometimes?' Does the expression mean one thing in one place and another in another? That would be a curious use of language. But what is the church?"

"All those who have been truly converted" (very abruptly).

"Yes. Then Cornelius and his friends were members of the church before they were baptized? They were converted, and received the Holy Ghost, too, and how do you understand this text? 'The Lord added to the church daily such as were saved?' and here is another, 'God hath set some in the church, first Apostles, secondly Prophets,' etc. Were these officers in an organized visible body or not?"

"I suppose they were."

"I think so; and since such a body existed then and

the Savior promised that it should continue forever, it must be an organized, visible body still. Do you belong to it?"

"I belong to no denomination, sir."

"Indeed? Then who ordained you to preach the Gospel?"

"Nobody, sir. I was called of God to labor for the salvation of sinners."

"Did God, with this supernatural call, give you any supernatural method of proving it? Do you work miracles, or speak many tongues?"

"Of course not. You are trifling."

"Not at all, I assure you. But it is written that 'Even Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest.' And hence I cannot think that he is pleased to have any one take upon himself to minister his word and sacraments without a lawful call and mission."

"I do not minister sacraments. I do not believe in sacraments."

"How superfluous then of our Savior to establish them! Do you preach that men can be saved without them, when our Lord said: 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved?'"

"I do not care to continue this conversation, sir," said Mr. Blow haughtily.

"I did not care to begin it," answered the stranger quietly, "but since you were good enough to force it on me I would thank you to answer my question. I suppose you claim to preach the Bible. Do you preach salvation without the sacraments?"

"They are mere forms, sir, and entirely unessential."

"The Scripture does not say so. It says, 'We are all baptized into one body;' 'Every one that has been baptized into Christ has put on Christ;' 'Baptism doth also now save us;' 'Repent and be baptized.' 'We

are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread;' 'He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself;' 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.' How can you say that the sacraments are unessential in the face of these words from the Scripture? Are you baptized, sir?"

"I don't choose to be catechised, sir."

"I answered your questions politely, sir. Have you ever been baptized?"

"Not that I am aware of."

"Indeed! you astonish me. Yet you claim to believe in the Bible, to be a follower of Jesus Christ, and to be a preacher of his word. How can you reconcile these things?"

"I do not feel called to defend my conduct before you."

"You are bound to do it, sir, before every one, in consideration of the claim you set up to be a guide of souls." No answer. The clergyman continued:

"I see that you cannot reconcile your position with the word of God. My dear friend, I don't wish to annoy you, but with God's help to set you right. Take the advice of one who has given a life's attention to these matters. Give up your self-assumed mission, which only serves to deceive and destroy the souls for which Christ died. Seek out His Church, and obey her, and perhaps, in time, you may be lawfully sent to preach a true gospel and administer saving grace."

"I do not need your advice, thank you," Mr. Blow said with some asperity.

"But I think you do," calmly pursued the other. "On your own admission, the Lord Jesus established a church, a visible organization of men. To her he gave authority to minister his word and sacraments. Surely to undertake such ministry outside of

her is wrong. And this you certainly have done, for you are a member of no denomination, and not even baptized. Am I not right?" Mr. Blow did not answer, but called to the driver to stop the stage. This being done, he got out and took a seat on the box, where he remained out of reach of the pertinacious clergyman to the end of the journey. As he went out a faint smile played around the corners of the stranger's mouth, but he said nothing to Mr. Smith or Mrs. Weekhart (who had witnessed in dismay their champion's discomfiture,) but continued to read his book in silence.

"That was a very impudent, bigoted fellow," remarked Mr. Blow, as he and his two companions were comfortably seated in the veranda of Mrs. Weekhart's house, after having been refreshed with a home-made and bountiful supper; "I had to leave the stage for fear of losing my temper, and being rude to him. He advanced the most absurd and unevangelical theories. I did not want to argue with him for, in my opinion, nothing is so annoying, and fruitless too, as religious controversy."

Mrs. Weekhart was of the same opinion. She never could see any religion in the Episcopal Church. And so the subject was dropped, for the consideration of their further movements in Waxahatchie; and they determined to begin services the next night, and to invite the co-operation of all the ministers of the place.

CHAPTER VII

WHEREIN ARE RECOUNTED THE ADMIRABLE SUCCESSES OF MR. ABEL BLOW, A. B., AND THE EXTRAORDINARY FORTUNE OF MR. J. S. SMITH— WITH OTHER THINGS

On the morning following the events related in the last chapter, Mr. Blow was called upon by the resident ministers of Waxahatchie, but two in number, both of whom professed themselves delighted by his visit, and entered heartily into his plans, promising to do all in their power to promote the success of the meetings. Notice of the services to be held that night was duly circulated and the largest meeting-house in the town secured. In the afternoon Mrs. Weekhart proposed to take our friends to drive and show them the surrounding country. Mr. Blow excused himself. She could take Mr. Smith if she pleased, but as for himself it was impossible. He expected to preach that night, and it was necessary that he should employ the time in such devotional exercises as might fit him to speak to the dying souls of men.

Mrs. Weekhart, with a look of reverential regard, assured him of her approval of his course, though to miss him on the drive would be a sad disappointment. Mr. Blow, with virtuous self-denial, replied that he felt the disappointment keenly, but duty, duty, it could not be for one instant neglected. So the carriage drove off without him.

As soon as it had disappeared, Mr. Blow donned his hat and walked out of town some distance across the prairie, and as he walked he reflected: "There is something wrong about my preaching. The sermons are all right, I could get no better. They are fiery and sensational enough for anybody. And I thought my delivery was as good as could be desired. But the people don't get excited—that's the long and short of it. Even that young donkey who exhorted the other night, made more sensation than I. And Holiton, why, he swept everything before him, though he only repeated what I had already said a thousand times better. It is his rant that tells, and I must get it. That must be the reason why the meetings ran out so soon at Dallas. It's miserable style. Any people of culture would be disgusted with it. But hang culture! I want to get hold of these people here, and make them shell out their money—and repent of their sins. To do that I must use the Holiton dodge, that's clear. I think I had better practice a little first."

By this time, Mr. Blow had arrived at a hollow in the prairie some two miles from town, a place which seemed to him suitable for his purpose. So taking his stand beneath a solitary tree, he addressed some cattle, which he had driven from its shade, and said in a sing-song whine: "My text, brethren, you will find in the 12th verse of the seventh Psalm, 'If he will not turn he will whet his sword," etc. He went on for some moments, and then stopped dissatisfied.

"That won't do. Not force enough. Too little swell and compass. He began again and went somewhat farther into the sermon; again he stopped.

"Not loud enough. I thought I could yell as loud as anybody. I can't get that pathetic twist on it, somehow. Try again." Again he began and with a force that seemed to please him. The cattle, which had

stood wondering spectators of his performance, turned tail and scampered off in alarm some distance, then looked back and with uplifted heads gazed on in amazement. Mr. Blow was doing his best.

Suddenly in the midst of his effort he was interrupted by a rude yell of laughter close behind him.

"Go it, Parson! go for 'em! Ha! ha! Derned uncivil of the mourners to run off that way! Ha! ha! ha! ha! Go for 'em! That yaller steer is the cussedest beast on these prairies. Go for him in particular! Oh! ho!! He's a sinner! If you convert him I'll give you ten dollars! Ha! ha! ha!"

Mr. Blow turned in alarm, and saw a sight that made him quake. Close to the tree behind him were two young men, fiercely bewhiskered, clad in broad-brimmed hats, flannel shirts and leathern leggings, with red sashes around their waists, in which they wore long knives. Each of them was armed besides with a carbine and two huge revolvers. They were sitting on their horses, shouting and laughing till the tears rolled down their cheeks. Said one:

"Bill, I reckon that's the parson that come out with sister Hannah. Go on, parson! don't let us interrupt you; you've hit the right lot this time. That's the doggondest bunch of cattle in these parts—that yaller steer in particular. Ha! ha! ha!"

"If you gentlemen will excuse me I think I will return to town," said Mr. Blow, mortified and alarmed.

"No you don't," replied the other. "Not till you get that yaller steer on his knees hollerin' for mercy. I wouldn't miss his bein' converted for nothin'."

Said Mr. Blow, "I beg your pardon. I hope I have not been trespassing on your property. It's time for me to return."

"Look here, parson," said the young man, "no foolishness, jest go on with that sermon. Me and Bill kind o' like it, and it'll do my cattle a heap of

good. You shoot off your jaw, or I'll do some shootin'," and he drew a revolver. Mr. Blow, terrified, turned toward the cattle and recommenced his sermon.

"Louder, parson, louder! They can't hear that." Mr. Blow spoke louder. "Put in the agony, parson, you're too easy on 'em. That won't fetch em. Pile it on!"

Mr. Blow exerted himself to obey.

"That's it. The yaller steer looks weak about the eyes already. He'll be crying soon. Git him down on his hunkers!"

The young men sat on their horses shouting with laughter, and every now and then responding a dismal Amen! That's so! O Lord! while Mr. Blow, the perspiration rolling profusely from his whole body, declaimed with all his might, in horrid dread that his enemies, having finished their sport, would shoot him down as a fitting conclusion. After nearly half an hour spent thus, Mr. Blow's persecutor said:

"Hallo, Bill! there's sister Hannah now. Come on, let's go. Good-bye, parson, we'll be to the meetin' to-night, you bet!"

Mr. Blow turned round in fear and trembling. The young men were just disappearing over the swell of the hill, riding at a mad gallop. Mrs. Weekhart and Mr. Smith were driving toward him in a carriage. He staggered. The landscape swam around before his eyes and he fell fainting to the ground. When Mr. Blow came to himself he found himself stretched on the turf, Mrs. Weekhart kneeling beside him in the utmost distress, and, utterly regardless of her own elegant costume, profusely bathing his head and naked chest with some excessively filthy water, which Mr. Smith was bringing for that purpose, in his (Mr. Blow's) hat, from a foul pool in the hollow hard by. Mr. Blow gazed for a moment into her handsome and compassionate face and burst weakly into tears.

"O Mr. Blow," cried Mrs. Weekhart, in an agonized voice, "*Dear, good* Mr. Blow, don't cry! Hurry, Mr. Smith, hurry with the water! He is going to faint again. O! that wicked, wicked boy! He will kill me with grief yet. I did hope that he might get good from the meetings—and see how he has acted! What did he do? Mr. Blow, what did he do? I hope he has not hurt you."

Mr. Blow did not answer, but wept sadly, motioning away the water, which nevertheless Mrs. Weekhart, in the goodness of her heart, poured bountifully over his head and body, filling his eyes, ears and mouth and saturating his clothing with the horrible compound.

Mr. Blow stopped crying, sat up, and feeling for his handkerchief wiped his face and beard. Then groaning deeply, he said: "Oh! the wickedness of men! Oh! What a narrow escape from death!" and again manifested symptoms of fainting.

Mrs. Weekhart in distress threw her arms around his neck, and called for more water. Mr. Blow was better instantly, and asked to be helped into the carriage, and that was, accordingly, done. As they drove toward home, Mrs. Weekhart again pressed him to let her know what her brother had done. Mr. Blow answered nothing, but leaned back in the corner of the carriage, his eyes streaming with tears and gazing into vacancy. It was evident that he had suffered a dreadful nervous shock and was completely unmanned. They conveyed him to Mrs. Weekhart's home as rapidly as possible; and after taking a glass of wine, at Mr. Smith's suggestion, he went to bed, where he lay, assiduously attended by Mrs. Weekhart, in profound silence, now and then uttering a deep sigh, and in tears constantly. Mr. Smith was furious, and swore in round oaths—which shocked Mrs. Weekhart dreadfully—that if he could catch

those villains, he would teach them a pretty hard lesson. It was plain that Mr. Blow was in no condition to preach that night; so, after a conference with Mrs. Weekhart, Mr. Smith went out toward evening to inform the ministers that Mr. Blow had been taken suddenly ill, but would probably be able to preach on the following night. While he was gone Mr. Blow heard voices in the adjoining room engaged in earnest but subdued conversation. He listened attentively. Mrs. Weekhart was talking with some man, but he could not distinguish the words. At last the man spoke out in angry tones: "I won't do it! If he would make a fool of himself, nobody's to blame for laughing at him. You can give him fifty dollars to keep his mouth shut, and if he don't I'll shut it for him. I'd just as lief shoot him as a rabbit."

Presently Mrs. Weekhart came in, pale and uneasy, and found Mr. Blow still paler. Said she:

"I hope, dear Mr. Blow, that you will forgive my brother, for my sake. He is very wild, but he didn't mean any harm. He is very sorry for having troubled you, since he has learned how seriously you were annoyed, and he desires to make what amends he can. And, if you please, don't say anything about what took place. He is so wild that I fear the consequences. Can you forgive him?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Blow resignedly; "it is our duty to forgive and pray for our enemies. I accept his apology (holding out his hand) since it takes a form that proves his sincerity, and I will promise, for your sake, not to mention the circumstance." Mrs. Weekhart put the money into his hand and said:

"Please tell me what occurred."

"I had gone to that quiet place," answered he, wiping his eyes, "to pray in private, and while engaged in that holy exercise, those wicked persons discovered me, and used me with all manner of abuse.

I had resigned myself to death rather than blaspheme when your opportune arrival delivered me." And Mr. Blow wept afresh.

"Pray don't be so troubled, my dear, my dearest friend," she cried, seizing his hand in both hers. "Try to forget it, and be comforted. God will reward your noble, heroic conduct."

That evening a great many people called to express their regret at Mr. Blow's ill health, and their disappointment that he was unable to preach. Nobody was admitted to see him. At Mr. Blow's entreaty, Mr. Smith bottled up his indignation, in great admiration for the truly Christian spirit of forgiveness that his friend manifested.

On the next evening, Mr. Blow had almost entirely recovered his strength and spirits, and was able to accompany Mrs. Weekhart and Mr. Smith to the meeting-house, where they found a crowded congregation in waiting. It was a large, low, unfinished room, capable of seating some 500 or 600 persons, and was crammed to its fullest capacity. The people were already engaged in singing, "Am I a soldier of the cross?" As Mr. Blow and Mr. Smith seated themselves in the high pulpit the former looked nervously around to see whether his enemies were present. Having examined the congregation carefully and not seen them, he felt reassured, and proceeded with the opening exercises. The people were evidently predisposed to be enthusiastic. The prayers were met by hearty, though irregular responses, proceeding mainly from a devout knot of elderly people grouped in the corner to the right of the pulpit; the hymns were taken up and heartily rendered by the whole congregation, and even the reading of the Bible elicited audible signs of feeling. Then Mr. Blow stood up to preach.

He was perfectly self-possessed, though somewhat

nervous. He had expected to make "Turn or Burn," his initial effort; but feeling now that this was impossible, he fell back on the "Visit to Calvary." He began in his ordinary style, but soon collecting himself, he managed to overcome the sense of disgust and dread associated with the Holiton delivery by the events of yesterday, and soon was "piling on the agony," as his persecutor had delicately expressed it, in a manner that cast Dr. Holiton entirely into the shade.

The effect was astonishing. Before he could conclude, the congregation was in such an uproar that it was simply impossible for him to be heard. He roared at the top of his voice, and at last was forced to sit down. Some were crying, some praying, some sighing and groaning bitterly, one or two singing. The people were in all sorts of postures—standing, sitting, kneeling, lying on the floor, mounted on the benches, almost every one in a state of most intense excitement. Mr. Smith then rose and sang the hymn "Where are the nine?" which had the effect of somewhat unifying and calming the excitement, and bringing a multitude of mourners to their knees around the pulpit. One of the brethren made a lengthy prayer, and as this restored a tolerable degree of quiet, Mr. Blow arose and resumed his sermon. By the time he had finished the excitement was as intense as before. Judging the moment opportune he then ordered the collection to be taken up, which was done, several brethren passing around their hats, and gathering no mean sum. After another prayer the mourners were desired to stay, and the congregation dismissed; but nobody manifested any inclination to go. The ministers proceeded to exhort and pray, Mr. Smith sang several hymns, and some twenty-five or thirty mourners professed to have experienced religion. Still the excitement was unabated, and as Mr. Blow

was wondering anxiously how to conclude the meeting one of the ministers called out in a loud tone: "Speak to them again, Brother Blow! One more word in season. These starving souls are longing for the bread of life." This proposition met with general favor, expressed by pious ejaculations from all sides. "O yes!" "More gospel!" "Speak to our souls!" So Mr. Blow arose and, omitting the text, began to deliver "Turn or Burn" with all the force and "agony" that he could command. The enthusiasm of his hearers was gradually reaching an uncontrollable pitch, when Mr. Blow was interrupted suddenly by a stentorian voice just outside the window near him: "Go in, parson. That's business. I've fetched the yaller steer up to hear you, and he's on his hunkers now!" A wild yell of laughter, as from a dozen throats, was followed by the mad galloping of horses. Mr. Blow stopped speaking; his face turned to the window, and assumed an ashen hue; his jaw fell; his knees knocked together; he reeled, and fell heavily to the floor.

The sensation was immense; some sprang to the window with naked revolvers; some rushed outside; some crowded toward the fallen evangelist. The steer was indeed just outside the window tied hard and fast with ropes in a kneeling posture, but not a soul was discernible near him.

"Stand back!" cried Mr. Smith inside, trying to raise Mr. Blow, "stand back! and give him air! bring some water!" But stand back, was easier said than done; the excited throng crowded forward, those behind pushing those before, till Mr. Smith was pushed down on top of his friend, and others over them, and for a time a very bedlam ensued, shouting, screaming, cursing, struggling. The living mass surged backward and forward and when order was at last restored, several persons were found badly bruised, and Mr.

Blow was taken out and carried to Mrs. Weekhart's house, to all appearance lifeless. A physician was soon called, who pronounced him alive, to Mrs. Weekhart's inexpressible relief, and proceeded to apply restoratives.

When the physician left, which was toward morning, he gave positive orders that Mr. Blow should remain in bed for a week, and be kept absolutely quiet—he must see no one; and the condition in which Mr. Blow found himself when he awoke late the next day from the sleep produced by the opiates which it had been necessary to administer, fully justified these directions. His whole body was so mauled and bruised that he could not move a limb without pain; and his nerves were so unstrung that he wept, moaned, complained and fretted "like a sick girl," Mrs. Weekhart, who was unremitting in her attentions, nursing and humoring him with unsleeping devotion. The whole town sympathized in his affliction, and a stream of visitors flowed to the house, bringing all manner of delicacies, and inquiring anxiously after the evangelist's condition. Intense popular indignation was also manifested against the perpetrators of the mischief, and probably they would have suffered for their fun, had it been possible to find them. But having learned of the excitement that they had caused, they wisely kept themselves out of the way. Mr. Smith was in a furious rage, and divided his time between waiting by Mr. Blow's bedside, and endeavoring to learn who and where were the offending parties, vowing dire vengeance if they should ever fall into his hands.

After a few days, when Mr. Blow had sufficiently recovered to allow of his sitting up and receiving visitors, several prominent gentlemen of Waxahatchie called in a body. They were deeply pained that their revered friend had suffered such ill-usage at the hands

of their fellow townsmen; they desired him to understand that the reprehensible conduct of these wicked cow-boys was held in general condemnation and abhorrence by all right-minded citizens, and should certainly be punished. They begged to assure him of the appreciation and regard in which the community held him and his self-denying efforts for the good of souls—in testimony of which feelings they hoped he would deign to accept a small purse of $250.00. And they were very anxious that his health should be soon restored sufficiently to permit him to continue his most edifying meetings.

Mr. Blow accepted the money with thanks and tears, and was grateful for the warm sympathy expressed by the community; but as to continuing the meetings, it was impossible. He had already been delayed a longer time than he could well spare. He must proceed immediately to fulfill an engagement which he had made at Cleburne, and he prayed the Lord to have mercy upon Waxahatchie, and render to its citizens a reward for their treatment of him.

After the gentlemen were gone, Mrs. Weekhart labored with Mr. Blow to change his mind, but he proved inexorable. The possibility of enduring another such experience as had already befallen him was not to be risked. Having exhausted all her resources of persuasion and argument, Mrs. Weekhart declared her determination to accompany them to Cleburne. She would drive them over in her own carriage. She could not bring herself to lose yet the holy influences of Mr. Blow's sermons and society. In two days more Mr. Blow had pretty well recovered his strength and spirits, and it was determined to set out, the next morning, for Cleburne. So, that night when the two were alone, Mr. Blow said:

"Well, Smith, venture number two is finished, though not altogether according to my hopes. We

had better now balance the books, don't you think?"

"Perhaps so," said Smith indifferently.

"Well, here is the money," producing the collection, which somebody had brought to the house the night of the meeting, and proceeding to count it carefully. "Forty-three dollars and a half" (writing in his book). "Debtor by cash collected, $43.50. That is the gross earnings, and the net too, for there is no expense to charge against it."

"But," said Mr. Smith, "there's the money that those gentlemen brought in the other night. How much is that?"

"Oh! That is strictly a private matter, and has nothing to do with our enterprise. It was understood in the beginning that the collections alone were to be divided. If anyone makes *you* a present, it is nothing to me. I don't claim any share in *that*;" and Mr. Blow gazed at his companion with an expression of frank and disinterested surprise in his pale blue eyes.

After a pause, during which Mr. Smith looked disconcertedly at the book, he answered doubtfully. "Well! if you think it fair, all right."

"Of course! of course!" returned Mr. Blow energetically, and turning to his book wrote: "Creditor by cash dividend to J. S. Smith, $21.75. Creditor by cash dividend to Abel Blow, A. B., $21.75; $43.50—$43.50—there!" Mr. Smith received his dividend silently, counted it slowly over, and put it into his pocket without a word.

"I hope," said Mr. Blow cheerfully, "that we shall do better at Cleburne."

"I hope so!" answered Mr. Smith moodily. "Good night."

CHAPTER VIII

IN WHICH THE EXTRAORDINARY FORTUNE OF MR. J. S. SMITH IS STILL FURTHER DEVELOPED

After an early breakfast, our evangelist, with Mr. Smith and Mrs. Weekhart, set out in that lady's carriage on the Cleburne road. The day was delightful, the road was in good condition, the horses fresh, everything conspired to make the ride a pleasure. Mr. Blow was in high spirits. He chatted and laughed, and commented upon every passing object. Mrs. Weekhart was cheerful and happy. She smiled at his jokes, answered his questions, and found a spiritual application in his most trivial remarks.

Mr. Smith alone was silent and moody. He answered every remark addressed to himself in monosyllables, as far as possible, and gazed vacantly at the long reaches of open prairie, or the clustering clumps of straggling mesquites (which objects principally constituted the landscape) and occasionally heaved a sigh. In fact, Mr. Smith was in a desponding mood. He was away from his love, and the distance between them was hourly growing greater and more insuperable, apparently. The bitter pain of absence had been partially forgotten for a time in the fervor of his newly-found religious emotions. But these had been somewhat cooled by the occurrences of the past few days, and the longing and weariness of his heart returned with renewed force. Again, the only thing that had reconciled him to this wide separation, the hope of rapidly acquiring a fortune that would justify

his love in the eyes of Mr. Williams, was beginning to appear less likely to materialize than he had supposed. The undertaking was now some three weeks old and more, and his net share of the profits amounted to only some twenty-five dollars. He thought he remembered a sort of tacit agreement that Mr. Blow was to save the souls while *he* took the money. But somehow the souls and the money seemed to go together. Not that he could accuse Mr. Blow of unfairness, or question the integrity of his purposes. Yet in spite of himself, he felt a sense of injustice as he thought of the large sum of money that was handed to Mr. Blow before his eyes, and of which he himself got no share. He felt disappointed. True, things might be better in the future, as Mr. Blow had said. But they might also be worse. At any rate Mr. Smith was very much downhearted, and said scarcely a word all day long. His conversation, however, seemed little missed. Mr. Blow and Mrs. Weekhart, on the back seat together, succeeded in entertaining one another amazingly well. They chatted, and laughed, and sighed, and each hoped that the other was comfortable, and not wearied by the journey. And the ride ended with the day, leaving them comfortably bestowed in the hospitable residence of Mr. Worthy, one of the prominent religious pillars of Cleburne. Here they were very warmly received.

Mr. Worthy was reverentially happy that his house was honored by so eminent a person as Mr. Blow. Mrs. Weekhart's coming was an unexpected feature of delight. It always afforded him intense pleasure to meet his dear devoted sister in the Lord, and his wife would enjoy her society even more than himself.

Mr. Smith he was glad to see, and hoped their acquaintance would be soon even pleasanter. And so they were all made to feel at home, though Mr. Smith felt growing upon him a sensation, that he had

before uneasily experienced, that he was a sort of fifth wheel to the coach. Mr. Blow also seemed to entertain something of the same estimate of him and to display it in an air of lofty indifference when Mr. Smith ventured a remark, and of gracious condescension whenever he (Blow) addressed him. Altogether Mr. Smith was not happy.

All the necessary arrangements for the prosecution of our evangelist's mission were easily perfected on the following morning. There were but two resident ministers in the place though five or six denominations, by means of itinerant preachers, maintained monthly services. The Methodist minister threw himself into the projected work with all his might. The other, an Episcopalian, who combined the duties of his sacred office with the calling of store-keeper, Mr. Blow hesitated about inviting, but finally concluded to banish all personal feeling, and show his wide charity (to Mrs. Weekhart's intense admiration) by extending him an invitation. The clergyman hesitated somewhat, but finally promised to attend. Services commenced that night. The attendance was much smaller than Mr. Blow had anticipated. The feeling manifested was very mild, and the collection did not exceed five dollars. All this in spite of Mr. Blow's most strenuous efforts. He preached "Turn or Burn" in the most vigorous style, and after the collection, and the "few remarks" of the Methodist minister, he returned to the charge with a fierce exhortation, given extempore, by which effort he surprised himself, and succeeded in inducing three persons to stand up in response to his closing request, that all who felt anxious about the condition of their souls would manifest their feeling by this action. No mourners came forward, and no inquirers staid when the congregation was dismissed.

As they walked homeward, Mr. Worthy felt dis-

appointed, and Mrs. Weekhart indignant, at the callous hardness of heart that could hear so powerful a discourse unmoved.

The minister, however, was hopeful. The notice of the meetings had not yet been fairly circulated in the country. The following meetings would have a larger attendance. They had made a very good beginning. Three anxious ones! it was an immense gain, considering the awful lethargy of the community, that had not witnessed a conversion in months.

Mr. Blow was loudly confident. "Rome was not built in a day," he said, "and how much greater is the importance of one soul. I feel sure that I have been appointed a chosen instrument to bring a blessing here. So far the goodness of God has pleased to crown my toilsome labors with glad success, and has given blessings far beyond my expectations." The next night the congregation, according to the minister's prediction, was greatly increased. Many people had come in from the country, in wagons and on horseback. The meeting-house was tolerably well filled, and in consequence, the feeling was higher. Mr. Blow gave the congregation "A Visit to Calvary," with decided effect, but no very boisterous excitement. However the song that followed, "Come to Jesus," by Mr Smith, brought two of the congregation to the mourners' bench. The minister gave as powerful an exhortation as lay in his power, and Mr. Blow offered an exciting prayer composed mainly of descriptions of hell and its agony. Then, as Mr. Smith was preparing to sing, Mrs. Weekhart stepped up to the pulpit and said:

"Let me sing them one of the songs of Zion. I am so anxious to do something to help on the good work."

The request could not be refused, so Mr. Smith

handed her the book, and she quickly selected the touching song, "Almost Persuaded." Mounting the platform she turned to the people and began to sing. The effect was good. She had a rich and clear voice of considerable power, although uncultivated. And she sang with such *abandon* of passion, her eyes full of tears and directed to heaven, her bosom heaving with emotion, and her handsome face full of longing pity, that no one could resist the appeal. A dozen persons, mostly young men, arose and came forward.

Mr. Blow was filled with intense delight, and his heart, hitherto wholly indifferent to the pretty widow, felt a sudden accession of emotion. He had liked her as a very useful person for the execution of his plans, he now felt that he admired her.

When she had finished he immediately arose and requested that his dear sister would sing one more hymn while the collection was being taken. She did so, and the collection was more than double that of the preceding evening.

Mr. Blow, inspired, proceeded to make a few more inflammatory remarks when one of the young men on the mourners' bench suddenly sprang to his feet and clapped his hands behind him with an agonized expression of face crying, "Oh! God!" A boy who sat behind him burst into a violent laugh, which was quickly smothered under a fit of coughing, as he glanced apprehensively into the stern face of an old gentleman who sat next him. Mr. Blow paused and looked at the young man, who, darting a revengeful glance at the boy, shamefacedly took his seat. It was plainly the work of a naughtily placed pin, but the opportunity was not to be lost. Springing from the platform, Mr. Blow seized the surprised and blushing young man by the hand and shouted:

"What is it, brother? What is it? Have you found the Lord?"

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"I don't know," hesitatingly answered the abashed victim, "but I think—(feeling furtively behind him) I believe that—"

"Yes," interrupted Mr. Blow, at the top of his voice, "yes! a dart from his quiver has touched you, his keen sword has smitten your heart! Don't be ashamed to acknowledge your Lord! Stand up! (dragging him to his feet) Stand up! and let your fellow-sinners know what the Lord has done for your soul. See! Brethren, see this brand snatched from the burning. O! what joy is now in the presence of the angels of God. Where is the next one to awake the rejoicings of heaven!" Mr. Blow still clung to his prize, and compelled him to kneel down there, while the congregation offered thanks for his conversion, after which he was allowed to take his seat.

"Don't you feel better, John?" inquired the boy behind, in a sympathizing whisper.

"Never you mind!" hissed John in answer, through his set teeth. No more conversions occurred, and after some further exercises Mr. Blow dismissed the congregation, first appointing, at the ministers' suggestion, a prayer-meeting to be held at ten o'clock the next morning.

The meetings continued, the attendance daily increased, the enthusiasm grew. It became necessary to have preaching twice and finally three times a day. The place of meeting soon had to be changed from the meeting-house, which was entirely too small to accommodate the swelling multitude, to a large arbor, constructed of branches, which was erected in the edge of the village. People hearing of the great meeting flocked to it from a distance of thirty and even forty miles. Many of the people of Waxahatchie came over to attend, and it was generally conceded that such an interest had not been roused for years. So matters went on for some two weeks, in which

time about eighty persons professed to have experienced religion.

But Mr. Blow was not satisfied. For some reason the collections did not keep pace with the other features; they rather fell off. Once only it amounted to twenty dollars, generally it reached but two or three in a day, though Mr. Blow took special pains that at every service the congregation should not lack opportunity to display their liberality. A great many people, in fact, grumbled at the persistence with which the hat was passed around, and it became almost impossible to persuade or force any one to perform that function.

The Methodist minister more than once hinted that it be dispensed with as calculated to drive away the people. But Mr. Blow discarded the suggestion on the ground that he considered giving a powerful means of grace. Very few, however, seemed desirous of cultivating their grace by this means, and Mr. Blow began to think it time for him to seek fresh souls to save. He suggested this, one night, to Mrs. Weekhart, as they were going home after the services arm in arm. She energetically protested. He was doing so much good. He could not find a more promising harvest.

"Yes," answered Mr. Blow, sighing deeply, "the harvest is plenteous, but my labor is now performed. I am to sow where others reap. The interest is aroused, souls are awake. To the ministry belongs the task of gathering them in. I must deny myself the delight of enjoying the fruit of my labors, and go on to sow on the rocks and amongst the thorns. I can stay but a day or two longer."

Mrs. Weekhart was deeply pained by this announcement. After walking some distance in silence she remarked:

"Yours must be a desolate life, so full of privations

and self-denials, away from your family, making friends only to leave them, not even letting yourself see the good you do! I pity you."

Mr. Blow sighed deeply. "My family! Yes, I once knew the delights of home, a fond wife and clinging little ones, but they are no longer mine. My Master said not to love wife or daughter more than Him, and I obey."

"Have you a family then?"

"I had. Yes, I had. But I gave them to God, and now I am homeless and alone. My only comfort is this holy work."

Mrs. Weekhart shed tears of compassion and sympathy.

Mr. Blow was much moved, and declared that the sympathy and appreciation of one congenial soul like hers more than repaid him for all his sufferings and privations. On the following day Mr. Blow made public his determination to depart. A general protest followed. Everyone who could get to him expostulated with him, urged every conceivable reason against his departure, and begged, prayed, entreated him to continue the meetings but one week longer at least. But Mr. Blow, turning over and over in his hand the paltry one dollar and fifteen cents which had just been collected, remained firm. He had been with them already more time than he ought. His conscience reproached him for neglecting the pitiable condition of the dying souls to whom yet he had not spoken. However delightful it would be to himself to remain and share the spiritual feast that they were enjoying, he dared not indulge himself. His proper work was done, and stern duty called him away. Even tears could not change his determination—not the tears of Mrs. Weekhart, which were abundantly shed. So the day went on almost gloomily, though the religious interest seemed rather to increase than

diminish. Toward evening, a stranger rode up to Mr. Worthy's gate on a stout gray nag, and without dismounting cried, "Hallo, within!" He was an elderly man, with long dark hair, an immense, unkempt gray beard, and shaggy, overhanging eyebrows, of medium height, and square, heavy-set frame, and was clad in a suit of blue jeans, not at all new and far from clean. Mr. Worthy went out to respond to the summons, and presently returned bringing in the stranger, whom he introduced as an old and dear friend of his, Mr. Jacob Samuels.

Mr. Samuels was a man of very few words. He merely nodded a salutation to Mrs. Weekhart, bowed coldly to Mr. Blow, looked Mr. Smith sharply over a moment, shook hands with Mrs. Worthy, muttering "Glad to see you," kissed the little Worthys, and asked for a chair in the veranda, where he and Mr. Worthy conversed till tea-time. At the tea-table Mr. Samuels manifested a healthy appetite, but steadily resisted every attempt to draw him into conversation; and after tea declined to go to the meeting, though he finally yielded this point to Mr. Worthy's somewhat persistent solicitation.

The meeting was rather larger and more enthusiastic than usual; Mr. Blow seemed to preach with even more force than ordinary; Mr. Smith and Mrs. Weekhart sang the songs in duet with fine effect, and all went on well until the collection was taken, when a serious difficulty ensued. As the hat was passing round a big, rough-looking fellow, sitting near the middle of the arbor, who wore an ugly scar on his cheek and two revolvers in his belt, when the hat was presented to him, took it, emptied the contents into his hand, and gave it back to the collector with a quiet "Thank you."

The collector, with a feeble, uneasy smile, still held the hat before him and said mildly:

"Don't take that! It belongs to the Lord."

The fellow looked fiercely at him and retorted: "See here! Do you know me?"

The collector smiled still more faintly and answered: "Yes, sir."

"Well, then, you know you'd better go on! I'll see that the Lord gits this here money."

The collector turned pale and continued his rounds. The congregation stared at the stranger with an expression of consternation, but nobody said a word or made a movement, while the fellow sat jingling the money complacently in his hand, and staring around at the disturbed and alarmed faces of the company, a defiant leer on his disfigured countenance.

Intense silence fell over the assembly. Mr. Blow, standing on the rostrum, glanced appealingly from the intruder first to the minister, then to Mr. Worthy, then around the congregation, but in every eye he read nothing but timid submission to the domineering bully, who presently called out in the easy manner of a master of the situation:

"Go on, parson! Say your little say, I ain't goin' to interfere with you, if you attend to your own business."

Here Mr. Smith sprang to his feet indignantly and said:

"I'd like to know if this crowd is going to suffer an outrage like this!"

Whereupon the stranger rose to his feet, and retorted with an oath.

"I'd like to know who's goin' to help it! Perhaps you'd like to try, young feller. I'm Bill Shootem, I am! Just come and see me."

"Yes, I'll help it, if nobody else will," cried Mr. Smith, springing from the rostrum and advancing towards him. "You can't scare me worth a cent!"

In a trice, the ruffian had a cocked revolver in each

hand. The crowd parted with a rush to either side of the arbor, men running, children screaming, women fainting, all scrambling to get out of the way.

"Put up your pistols, coward, I am unarmed," said Mr. Smith, still advancing.

"You'd better be praying than calling names," coolly returned the other, slowly raising his right arm.

Mr. Worthy's friend, Mr. Samuels, who had sat just behind the desperado, hitherto an unmoved spectator of the scene, suddenly rose, snatched the ruffian's pistol from his left hand and struck up his right arm just as the pistol went off, exclaiming:

"You shan't shoot an unarmed man; give him a fair fight if you dare."

"I'll settle you in a minute, old man," hissed the scoundrel, "when I'm done with this young chap," and he again pointed the revolver at Mr. Smith. But the latter was now close upon him, and seizing the weapon by the muzzle twisted it out of his hand, receiving the ball in his arm; he threw the smoking revolver across the arbor, and struck the ruffian a violent blow with his clinched fist. In an instant they had closed, and presently were rolling together on the ground in deadly combat.

By this time, the arbor was deserted except by three or four of the boldest men in the vanished crowd, one of whom proposed to separate the combatants.

"No!" said Mr. Samuels, who was standing with the bully's cocked revolver in his hand. "It's a fair fight! I'll shoot the man that interferes. Bill Shootem's never met his match before."

So the conflict went on, the desperado shrieking curses, and straining every nerve to do his enemy a mortal hurt. Mr. Smith kept silent, but struggled with equal energy to cripple his adversary. After a while it began to be manifested that Mr. Smith,

though the smaller of the two, had the advantage of the other in endurance and activity, and presently he succeeded in fastening a vice-like grasp upon his opponent's throat. The ruffian struggled to get free, but all his efforts were in vain, and presently his face grew black, his tongue protruded and his hand fell powerless to his side.

Mr. Smith loosed his grasp a little, and quietly demanded: "Are you ready to give up that money now?" The other signified an assent, and produced the cash. Mr. Smith took and pocketed it and then released his man, remarking:

"You'd better be careful after this whose meetings you interfere with."

The desperado answered nothing, but painfully rising from the ground, wiped his bleeding face, and turning to Mr. Samuels said sullenly:

"Give me that six-shooter."

"Not if I know it," returned Mr. Samuels. "You're not fit to handle dangerous weapons, you might hurt yourself. You'd better find your horse and make yourself scarce in these parts."

The unhappy desperado unwillingly obeyed, and Mr. Samuels, picking up the other revolver, escorted Mr. Smith home, and insisted on himself seeing to and bandaging his wound, which, however, proved to be slight.

CHAPTER IX

WHICH EXPLAINS SOMETHING HITHERTO RATHER OBSCURE

It was not yet late when Mr. Smith and Mr. Samuels reached Mr. Worthy's house and found that gentleman, his family and guests, anxiously awaiting them and very much relieved by their arrival. Mr. Samuels, in a few brief, graphic words, described what had taken place, and Mr. Smith was at once a hero. Mrs. Weekhart especially lavished upon him in a short time more attentions than she had hitherto shown him in all the weeks of their acquaintance. Mr. Worthy praised his pluck and nerve, and assured him that by vanquishing the ruffian he had conferred an inestimable boon upon the whole community, which had long been terrorized by that very scoundrel, and had lost some of its best citizens by his murderous hands. Mrs. Worthy anxiously bustled about to find healing restoratives for his wound, which she insisted upon bandaging afresh; and brought out brandy and the choicest food she could prepare, affirming that he must be in need of refreshment. The children gazed with wondering admiration at the man who had "whipped Bill Shootem." And altogether Mr. Smith was exalted exceedingly, to Mr. Blow's indefinable and inexplicable, but very positive displeasure.

At last, Mr. Worthy and Mr. Samuels having taken seats in the veranda outside, where Mr. Samuels was endeavoring to learn from his friend something of Mr.

Smith's antecedents, Mr. Blow suggested that perhaps it would be best for Mr. Smith to retire and take a heeded rest. This proposition was unanimously agreed in. So the two said good night and retired to their room. When they were alone, Mr. Blow said:

"I am very sorry, Smith, that you allowed your carnal temper to betray you into this difficulty, and God was very merciful in sparing your life through it. It seems to me that force is the idol worshiped in this part of the country, and we had a priceless opportunity of testifying against it by an exhibition of Christian meekness and forbearance, an opportunity which you by your weak anger spoiled. Do you think I would not have attacked that poor wretch had I thought best? But I preferred to endure his abuse in the hope of saving his soul."

"Humph!" returned Mr. Smith, sharply. "I don't intend to let any bragging scoundrel impose on me, Christianity or no Christianity. And I don't care to be lectured about it either. It's all very well to talk goody about it now that the trouble's over. I noticed that you did not interfere at the time, and you took pains to get safely out of the way. I for one never ran off and left a friend in a tight place."

"Well, well," said Mr. Blow, patronizingly, "I don't mean to annoy you. I don't suppose a man of your impulsive nature is to be blamed if he sometimes fails to govern his temper. I hope you succeeded in making him disgorge the collection?"

Mr. Smith silently took the money out of his pocket and desposited it on the table.

"Here is the balance of the proceeds of this last venture," said Mr. Blow, taking from his valise a package of money, and his account book. "And as we go to-morrow, we had better square the account." He proceeded to count the money and make various

entries in his book; after a while he turned to Mr. Smith, and, counting out twenty-five dollars. handed the amount to him, saying:

"There is your share."

Mr. Smith counted the money slowly over and said, "How is that? Were there only fifty dollars collected? Let me see it, please."

Mr. Blow had pocketed the money.

"Yes," he said, "there was more collected. But the expenses had to come out."

"What expenses?"

"Why, our board in the first place. We can't expect Worthy to feed us here for twenty days gratis. It's worth at least seventy-five cents a day, apiece, and I shall pay him that, which makes thirty dollars, and I intend to offer to pay Mrs. Weekhart at least twenty dollars for the use of her carriage. Here is the statement, if you want to see it; but I hope you don't think I would cheat you. (Reading) *Debtor*, by cash collected at forty-four meetings: One hundred and twenty-five dollars. *Creditor*, by board to Worthy, thirty dollars; by carriage hire, twenty dollars. By cash dividend to Abel Blow, A. B., fifty dollars. By cash dividend to Jacob S. Smith, twenty-five dollars."

"I think it but fair," he went on, "that our dividends should be in the ratio of two to one. My part of the work is vastly more fatiguing and more important than yours. And, besides, my necessities are very much greater as I have a large family dependent upon me, while you have but yourself to care for. I had intended this scale of division from the beginning, but hitherto the amounts to be divided have been so small that I did not wish to appear ungenerous, and gave you half, when I could not really afford it."

Mr. Blow spoke rapidly with his eyes on the floor,

and when he finished looked up at Mr. Smith s face with an expression of great benevolence.

Mr. Smith sat staring at him intently, and thoughtfully twisting the ends of his huge mustache, under which his invisible lip was curling with contempt. He continued so for some moments, and then said, in a tone of suppressed anger and undisguised disdain:

"I believe I have got your measure at last, and I don't know how it is I've been so long finding it. Take your money—take it all; you certainly need it, when you go so low for it. I don't want anything to do with that money. I just want to tell you once what kind of a man you are: You are a liar, a swindler, a thief, a hypocrite, and a dog, and I am a fool for letting you impose on me so long. I would thrash you soundly if you were not too dirty to touch." And Mr. Smith strode out of the room.

Mr. Blow gathered up the money and locked it up in his valise, muttering: "I am sorry he is so violent and angry. I did not think he was of so avaricious a disposition. Well, I forgive him, and am not displeased to be rid of him; he is no help to my work, anyhow," and Mr. Blow said his prayers and retired.

Mr. Smith walked out of the house, and began to take hasty and irregular turns up and down the yard in front of the door. He was angry, very angry, indeed; angry with Mr.. Blow, angry with himself, angry with the whole world, and so absorbed in his tumultuous emotions that he did not notice Mr. Samuels, who sat in a dark corner of the veranda, smoking his pipe, and contemplating from beneath his shaggy eyebrows the manifest disquiet of the young man striding around like a chained bear. After a time the cool night-air had the effect of somewhat calming Mr. Smith's excitement and he gradually paced the yard with a more quiet and regular step, when he was suddenly startled by a remark from the darkness of the veranda just at his elbow:

"You seem oneasy, young feller."

Mr. Smith stopped, and having made out who the speaker was, answered:

"Yes, I am a little."

"Well," continued the first speaker, "I'm glad you came out, any way, for I wanted to talk with you a bit before I went. Sit down here." Mr. Smith reluctantly obeyed.

"Let me see," went on Mr. Samuels, "your name is Smith? No? Jacob Samuel Smith, Worthy says."

"Yes, sir. That is my name."

"Your father perhaps was named Smith? Patrick Henry Smith? and you was born in Gauley County, Va., about twenty-seven years ago? and your mother's name was Julia Maria Hotchkiss?"

"You seem to know my history pretty well!" answered Mr. Smith in astonishment.

"And you was named after your father's brother, that had to leave the country while you was a little shaver for parts unknown?"

"Where did you find out all that!" exclaimed Mr. Smith.

"Don't talk too loud," cautioned Mr. Samuels. "I lost sight of you and yours for a long time, but I knowed you the minute I set eyes on you, and I own I was disgusted to find you in such business. It don't look well for a man that looks so much like your father, to be singing hymn-tunes and whining cant around the country. Quack doctors is bad enough, but quack preachers is worse. Don't say anything (Mr. Smith was about to reply.) I want to talk. I don't talk much, so let me have my say. I wouldn't have said a word to you, being in such business, but just let you go on, if it hadn't been for the fuss to-night, and I seen you was a chip off the old block. I'm your uncle Jake—now just keep still—and I've been in this country ever since I left Virginny. You needn't

be afraid of me for a murderer. It was your father that killed Bill Harrison, and he done it fair to save his own life. I was the only one that seen it. But nobody would have believed me, and if Patrick had been suspicioned it would have been a long term in the penitentiary, if he got off from hanging. So I says to Patrick, 'You've got a wife and a baby and are comfortably settled, and I am single, with nothing to hold me. So I'll put out somewhere, and they'll lay the blame to me.' He wouldn't hear to it, but I was bound to do it; and made him promise to keep his mouth shut. So I got on my horse, and struck off through the mountains. I had a hard time of it for a while, but now I'm all right. I've got a considerable ranch down here in Gonzales County and I ain't got no family, and sometimes I feel lonesome. I've been trying to get track of you for several years; but I never could hear from you. How did you get mixed up with that preaching feller? He is a bad lot."

Mr. Smith proceeded to give an account of his relations with Mr. Blow, omitting however all mention of Miss Dolly.

"Ain't there a woman in this business?" queried Mr. Samuels. "I reckon you must be in love, or nobody could make such a fool of a Smith."

Mr. Smith confessed that his uncle was right.

"Tell us about her," said the old man. Mr. Smith rather reluctantly and bashfully did so.

"Well," answered his uncle, "I reckon we can fix that up. I like you, Jake; you're a spunky boy, and seem to have pretty good sense. If you want to come and live with me, say so. I've got a plenty for us both."

Mr. Smith answered: "I am very much obliged to you, Uncle Jake, and don't want to appear ungrateful, but I never have been under obligations

to anybody, and I never intend to be. If you can give me any work that will pay me, I'll be glad to get it. I want to make what I can, but I won't take anything that I don't earn."

"Humph!" ejaculated the other. "Foolish enough! but just Patrick Henry over again. I suppose you wouldn't be willing to take my property if I died and willed it to you? Well! I ain't going to do that right away. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I've got to have another major-domo on the ranche, for the man I've got is going to quit when I get home. You can have his place at seventy-five dollars a month and found. I reckon you've got head enough to attend to it. What do you say?"

"I say, 'thank you', and I'll accept your offer."

"All right! now let's go to bed. We must be in the saddle by six o'clock. I want to make a long ride to-morrow."

Mr. Blow was surprised, when he made his appearance rather late the next morning at the breakfast-table, to be informed that Mr. Samuels had discovered in Mr. Smith a sister's son, and had taken him with him to his home; that they had already been more than an hour on the road.

Mr. Blow professed himself deeply pained at the ungrateful conduct of his associate in leaving so unceremoniously without a word to himself, and at his unfaithfulness in deserting the holy work to which he was pledged, for the prospect of worldly gain. However, he was not surprised, he said, and had often remarked in his companion manifest signs of a lack of true consecration, and a plain hankering after the flesh-pots. But what troubled Mr. Blow most in his table-talk, which was unintermitting, was the unprovided state in which he was left to continue his spiritual campaign. He was no singer himself and disliked to trust to what volunteer help he might find in that

direction. Music was a powerful auxiliary to his work, and the character of it was all-important. He must have a companion that could sing for Jesus, and sing from the heart. The spirit was of greater consequence than the voice. After talking on the subject for a long while, he turned abruptly to Mrs. Weekhart and said:

"Sister Weekhart, you have both the voice and the spirit. Do you not regard these circumstances as a special call for you to consecrate your talents to the Lord's service?"

All eyes were instantly turned upon her. She blushed deeply, and stammered out a wish that she were worthy to share so noble a work with so good a man.

"It is not a question of worth," said Mr. Blow emphatically, "but a question of duty. You are worthy to work with a much abler instrument than I. But I think that Providence clearly indicates here the path of life that He means you to follow, my dear sister. He puts a choice before you. Will you battle at my side against the overflowings of this world's fiery sins, or will you not? It is a matter that you must decide before God."

Mrs. Weekhart blushed still deeper, and covered her face in confusion.

"So public," she murmured. "Never thought of such a thing for a moment. I must think it over first. You are *so* good!" And with a melting glance at the evangelist out of her handkerchief, Mrs. Weekhart rose from the table and disappeared into the next room, whence she was heard a moment after in a flood of tears. Mr. Blow pushed back his chair, and arose with an annoyed look, remarking, "Mrs. Weekhart seems to regard my proposition with extraordinary emotion. It may be that I have required too great a sacrifice of her. It is hard to give up all at the call of God and duty."

"But," urged Mrs. Worthy, "you must consider how very publicly you addressed her Such a thing is a shock under any circumstances."

"Yes," sighed Mr. Blow, "I remember the fierce struggle I had with myself."

Mr. Worthy and his wife exchanged glances of doubtful inquiry, but evidently neither understood the relevancy of this remark. Presently that gentleman remarked:

"I do not doubt, from what I have observed, that Mrs. Weekhart will accept your offer when she becomes calmer; and you are to be congratulated. She is a noble, good woman, and eminently fitted to be your associate."

"Yes," assented Mr. Blow, "I esteem her so, and I have no doubt that, with her help, I shall accomplish even more good than would have been possible with Mr. Smith."

Again Mr. Worthy glanced a query at his wife, and found it hopelessly returned. But Mr. Blow gave room for no further remarks on the subject, but began to discuss his prospects for future work. He had already determined to proceed to Waco, but found that the stage did not leave till the next day, and to Mr. Worthy's no little mystification, he expressed great vexation at this fact. He was anxious to start that very morning.

"You could hardly expect," remarked Mr. Worthy, "that a lady could make her preparations in so short a time."

"Very true," returned Mr. Blow, "very true! That must be taken into consideration."

After a time, as Mr. Blow and Mr. Worthy were seated on the veranda, Mrs. Worthy came out and informed the evangelist that Mrs. Weekhart was ready to speak to him. He arose and went in, while Mr. Worthy strolled away from the house, and

his wife turned busily to train a rosebush close to the parlor window.

As Mr. Blow entered the parlor, Mrs. Weekhart arose blushingly, and timidly extended her hand. Mr. Blow coolly took the proffered hand in his and seating himself beside her, said:

"I hope you have thought and prayed over this matter, and decided to go with me."

Mrs. Weekhart glanced at him. His weak blue eyes were gazing into her face with a wistful expression. Her gaze fell as she whispered a faint "Yes."

"I am very glad to hear it," he said quietly, pressing her hand gently and releasing it. "Very glad indeed. It relieves me from a very distressing predicament. I hope you can make your preparations to start to-morrow morning. I know that a lady does not move with as much facility as a gentleman, but I know you have too much good sense to carry anything except what is indispensable. The stage leaves in the morning at six o'clock; or perhaps you prefer to take your own carriage?"

"Of course we can go in my carriage. It will be much better than a public conveyance, but—"

"It is very kind of you," interrupted he. "My expenses are necessarily large, and your goodness will allow of great saving."

"O! that is nothing! my l—I mean, Mr. Blow, my property is all at your service. But would it not be better?— I don't wish to suggest—I have perfect confidence in you—but where will?—"

Mr. Blow interrupted again:

"At Waco," he said, "I have already sent word before, and everything will be ready by the time we arrive. So, you see, I am very anxious to get on as soon as possible. You are sure that you can be ready to start to-morrow?"

"Yes, I will try, but it is very short notice; how-

ever perhaps you are right in saying that the simplest preparation will be best."

"I think so, decidedly." And Mr. Blow arose and left the room.

Mrs. Weekhart looked after him, wondering whether to laugh or cry.

"It's so strange," she said to Mrs. Worthy when that lady came in. "I have often imagined what my second betrothal would be like, but I never fancied such a thing as this. I know he loves me deeply, but he is as cool and reserved as can be. He didn't kiss me, nor call me one pet name, hardly touched my hand. I hope he won't be so always. O Mrs. Worthy, I long to be loved—to have some one who will never tire of kissing and petting me."

"You deserve to be loved, dear," answered the elderly woman, "and you are so sweet that I am sure Mr. Blow will love you to your heart's content. But when and where are you to be married?"

"At Waco, as soon as we get there. Mr. Blow says that he has already sent on word, and made all the arrangements. Very presumptuous of him to do so before I had consented, wasn't it?"

Mrs. Worthy smilingly supposed that Mr. Blow had read her answer in her eyes, as everybody else had, which made Mrs. Weekhart blush again. But that matron entered her strong protest against such summary proceedings. Mrs. Weekhart ought to have at least two weeks to provide a *trousseau* and invite her friends to the wedding, and be married at home where she was known. But Mrs. Weekhart thought it much better as it was, for if her brother should discover her intentions he would certainly interfere.

Mrs. Weekhart passed a busy, happy day preparing for the morrow's journey, and Mr. Blow a long, tedious one, fretting at the delay. He walked over to the arbor, and to the meeting-house, but could

hardly realize that they had been the scenes of yesterday's excitement. Everybody was gone. The minister had left town to meet an appointment at some other station. The business and gossip of the small place were going on as though no great revival had been held, and Mr. Blow was anxious to be off also.

CHAPTER X

WHICH RELATES A DISAPPOINTMENT AND AN EXPLANATION

Early the next morning Mrs. Weekhart's carriage was at the door. Mrs. Weekhart's trunk and Mr. Blow's valise were secured in place behind the carriage. Breakfast was over, and all was ready for the starting, when Mr. Worthy, who had gone out some time before, returned and told Mrs. Weekhart that a gentleman friend of his, Mr. Nophath, was going over to Waco, and would be glad of a seat in her carriage. Mrs. Weekhart objected. The prospect of a third party in the carriage was anything but agreeable to her. She did not allege this reason, however, but said that the springs of the carriage were not of the strongest; that the weather was too hot to overload the horses; that it would be very unpleasant for Mr. Nophath to have to ride on the front seat with the negro driver, and everything else that she could imagine.

Mrs. Worthy took her aside and argued that it would be very imprudent for her to go on such a trip alone with Mr. Blow, and would certainly give cause for scandalous remarks. Whereat Mrs. Weekhart was extremely offended. It was a shame, she thought, to suggest such a thing. Mr. Blow was above suspicion, and she would not be afraid to go with him to the ends of the earth. However, Mrs. Worthy persisted, and finally Mrs. Weekhart con-

sented to refer the matter to Mr. Blow and leave the decision with him.

Mrs. Worthy represented to Mr. Blow that Mr. Nophath was an intelligent man, whose company could not but be agreeable, and moreover a person of no religion, whom he might be able to influence for good. Mr. Blow had no objection to his company; in fact, was rather glad to have it, especially if by taking him they could gratify Mr. Worthy in any manner. So Mrs. Weekhart gave a reluctant consent to the proposal.

Presently they bade adieu to the Worthy family and drove to the residence of Mr. Nophath to take him in. He was in waiting, and soon they were on the road.

Mr. Nophath was an elderly gentleman of sober address and good manners, who took pains to make himself agreeable. He hoped he was not intruding, or putting them to any inconvenience. He had expected to take the stage, but Mr. Worthy had urged him to accept Mrs. Weekhart's kind invitation and ride with them, and he appreciated her courtesy very highly. Of course, Mr. Blow, who spoke as though the carriage and the kindness were his own, was honored and delighted with his company, and soon they were on the best of terms.

For a time the conversation was brisk and merry, Mr. Nophath had a fund of humor and a stock of anecdotes apparently inexhaustible with which he kept Mrs. Weekhart in fits of laughter, and almost made her forget that he was interrupting the tender *tete-a-tete* she had looked forward to. The effect of his conversation upon Mr. Blow was not so happy. That gentleman's stock of wit was very small, and soon exhausted, and he began to feel annoyed that Mr. Nophath absorbed so much of his fair companion's attention. He was uneasily conscious of not

shining with peculiar brilliancy, and determined to make a diversion in his own favor. So he finally remarked, in his solemn style:

"You failed to attend the meetings in Cleburne, Mr. Nophath."

Mr. Nophath looked a trifle annoyed as he answered:

"No, you are mistaken, sir; I attended several times."

"I should hardly call that an attendance," rejoined Mr. Blow. "You did not come regularly enough to enter into the spirit of them and receive a blessing from them."

The other answered carelessly: "No. That is very true."

"May I ask," pursued Mr. Blow, in an inquisitorial style, "why you did not attend? Was it through simple indifference to religious matters, or from actual hostility to God?"

"I would prefer, Mr. Blow," said Mr. Nophath frankly, "not to discuss the matter. I have my opinions on these subjects and you have yours, and probably we are both opinionated, and should simply disagree; and to disagree is disagreeable. I dislike to be disagreeable."

"Yes, sir. So do I," said Mr. Blow pompously. "But a trifling question of likes and dislikes is not to be considered beside matters of such importance as the eternal interests of the soul. I fear that you are a disbeliever, sir, and have no good hope of heaven."

"Well, sir," answered Mr. Nophath resignedly, "possibly from your point of view I may be a disbeliever, though I do not consider myself so."

"What do you mean by that? Have you ever experienced religion?"

"If you wish me to define my position, it is this: I believe that there is a God who created and governs

the world. I believe that I have a soul, that it is immortal, and that its condition in the future depends on its conduct in this life. These truths I accept on grounds of reason. I would gladly believe more if I could. I should like to believe that God has revealed himself to man, and taught him how to live in this world that he may be happy in the next I would gladly believe that some provision had been made, as the Christian religion says there has, to take away the sins of men, and strengthen their natural frailty. I have tried to believe these things, as I was taught them in my youth by my parents, who were both pious Christians and members of the Congregational church; but I cannot believe them, for I cannot find the slightest trustworthy evidence to support them."

Said Mr. Blow, "Why, sir, you astonish me! What greater evidence can you ask than the word of God? We have the Bible, sir, the precious revelation that God has given. The Bible is the Christian religion, and all that is needed to save the soul."

"That is the very point," returned Mr. Nophath. "I was taught from infancy to regard the Bible as the word of God. I would be glad to believe that it is. But the more I study about it, the less reason I see to accept it. If you can show me any good reason to think the Bible a divine revelation you would lay me under great obligations."

"That is very easy," said Mr. Blow triumphantly. "The Savior tells us that it is. Did he not say 'Search the Scriptures'?"

"Yes, but how do you know that he said that?"

"Why, the Bible says so."

"Very true. The Bible no doubt claims to be a revelation from God, but that proves little. The Koran and the Book of Mormon make the same claim. Suppose I claimed to be the heir of a great estate. Do you suppose I could get possession of it

without some evidence better than my claiming it?"

"But everybody believes that the Bible is God's word."

"Not quite everybody, but a great many, I grant. And this wide conviction no doubt creates a strong presumption in its favor. If a great many people were convinced of the truth of my claim to the supposed estate, that would be powerful presumptive evidence in my favor, but such as would not stand a moment in court against or in place of one reliable witness. Besides, we know that the greater part of this presumption in favor of the Bible is mere prejudice. The mass of our European ancestors were converted from heathenism by fire and sword. The Bible was thrust on them, and a belief in it instilled into their children, and so we have it to-day—merely on prejudice and tradition."

"But," answered Mr. Blow, "the Bible has always been accepted as the word of God. Every generation from the beginning of Christianity has held to its truth."

"That only carries the tradition farther back and makes it more uncertain. We don't know how people in the third or fourth or fifth century regarded the Bible. We don't know that the book which we call the Bible is at all like the one that they had under that name. We do know that, for centuries, it was in the hands of the Roman Catholic church—a body that both of us consider extremely evil and corrupt—and we do not know how much they altered it. I believe that there are whole chapters, and even books, interpolated by them—the sixth chapter of John, for instance, and the books of Timothy. They were evidently composed in the interests of priestcraft. So was the Second Corinthians, and in fact a great deal more."

Mr. Blow had not the faintest idea of the contents

of the particular portions of Scripture mentioned by Mr. Nophath, and feeling uneasily conscious of his inability to follow his antagonist into any argument on the internal evidences of the Bible, fell back upon his former ground. He said: "Whatever the Bible may teach, we are bound to accept it as the word of God. It is not our business to criticise but to believe. And we know that it is God's word because it has always been considered so. The whole church in all ages has held this truth, and handed it down from father to son from the very beginning. If you reject it you have no hope of salvation."

"Now you are making an appeal," rejoined the other, "that no Protestant is entitled to. You are trespassing on Catholic ground. The Anglican church, the Greek church and the Roman church advance that very argument. They say: The Church, a corporate, organized institution, is as old as—yes, older than the Bible, and is a living witness of the fact of a divine revelation. Well, if we believe that, we must believe the rest of their claims, which we cannot and will not do, for they hold sacramentarian and sacerdotal doctrines, and claim authority over consciences utterly repugnant to the spirit of Protestantism. If they do have any historical connection with primitive Christianity, they have corrupted that Christianity and corrupted the Bible to sustain their falsehoods. So that, if there is any truth in the Gospel, and Jesus Christ did establish a Church, it is lost entirely, and the revelation is necessarily lost with it. The faith that Protestants have in the Bible is merely a blind prejudice that they have inherited from Catholic ancestors. The most advanced and intelligent Protestants are beginning to recognize this. They are throwing away the Bible, with its great mass of myths, and returning to the religion of Reason and nature."

Mr. Blow listened in perplexity. He was not convinced, but he knew not what to answer.

"You are wrong, sir," he said, "all wrong! Your argument amounts to nothing—just nothing at all (with a majestic wave of the hand); we know that the Bible is the word of God. The Spirit bears witness by the effect which it produces on the souls of men. I have seen the preaching of the Word produce marvelous outpourings of grace. I have seen tears of repentance flow. I have heard the rejoicings of redeemed souls. These effects could not be produced by anything but the Spirit of God."

"What do you mean by the Spirit of God?"

"I mean the gracious outpouring of His love, by which He converts sinners, and rejoices saints."

"Your definition is not very exact. Is the Spirit of God a divine person, or an effect produced in human persons, or an influence that proceeds from the divine to the human?"

Mr. Blow hesitated a moment and then answered:

"Well, sir, to be exact, I consider the Spirit to be an effect in human souls produced by an effective influence that flows from the preached Word."

"And what is the precise effect produced by this effective influence?"

"The precise effect differs in different cases, but it may be generally defined as a spiritual awakening, or conversion, or regeneration."

"Do you consider the usual performances at camp-meetings and revivals, as the proper effect of God's Spirit?"

"Most assuredly, sir. Those blessed occasions are the seasons when the Spirit is most abundantly outpoured, and, sir, to characterize them by so irreverent an expression as 'performances,' is most sinful and offensive, sir." Mr. Blow spoke with dignified asperity.

"I meant no offense," rejoined Mr. Nophath good-humoredly, "but it seems reasonable to suppose that an influence exerted by an infinite Spirit, which God is, would rather make men act as reasonable beings, than like fools and idiots. But I may—"

Mr. Nophath was suddenly interrupted by a harsh voice, which shouted close to the carriage:

"Stand! Throw up your hands!"

The carriage stopped suddenly, and looking up in alarm, its occupants found a mounted man with a black mask, and a cocked revolver in each hand, on either side of them.

"Now," shouted one of the masked figures with an oath, "I'll let you know who Bill Shootem is. Hold up your hands, I say, and get out of that carriage."

The command was obeyed. The masked man surveyed the party a moment, and with a volley of horrible oaths, cried:

"That's not the man. Look here, parson, where's that singer feller? He's the man I'm after!"

Mr. Blow, as white as a ghost, answered, "I beg your pardon, sir. If you mean Mr. Smith, the gentleman who was with me at Cleburne, sir, I dismissed him, sir, for his very unchristian conduct, and extreme incivility to you, sir, at the meeting. I hope you will not be angry with me on account of his rudeness, sir. I was very much annoyed by it, and—"

"Where is he?" interrupted the ruffian, with another horrible oath. "I want to settle with him."

"I believe, sir, that he went toward Austin. He left yesterday morning without saying a word to me."

"That's a lie!" thundered the ruffian. "If you don't tell me where he is in a minute I'll shoot you, you whining dog!" And he pointed his revolver at Mr. Blow.

The evangelist, in an agony of fear, threw himself on his knees, and with clasped hands cried:

"O don't shoot! Please, Mr. Shootem, dear, good, Mr. Shootem, don't shoot. I don't know where he is. I swear I don't. O don't shoot me!" With this Mr. Blow fell to the ground fainting, and Mrs. Weekhart, in great distress, assured the villain that Mr. Blow had spoken the truth, and interceded piteously for his life.

"Well," said the desperado, "I don't reckon I'll shoot him; he looks to be dead now, the white-livered calf. Come, Jake, hurry up and search them and let's be after the other one. He's the man I want."

His companion accordingly dismounted and soon rifled the pockets, trunks and valises of the travelers of all the money and jewelry he could find; then mounting their horses the two rode off at a gallop across the prairie.

They were scarcely out of sight when Mr. Blow recovered his senses and was overjoyed to find himself alive. But when he learned how the party had been robbed of all their valuables, he almost fainted again. He broke out into vehement complaints and laments. He would have justice of the scoundrels; they should refund the money. They should be hung! If he ever met them again he would shoot them without mercy.

In truth, Mr. Blow was by far the heaviest loser of the three. Mr. Nophath had had with him but a few dollars to meet his traveling expenses, and the same was the case with Mrs. Weekhart, while the evangelist lost about eight hundred dollars. No good was to be accomplished by complaints, so they soon collected the scattered contents of their trunks and valises, and resumed their journey.

The conversation, however, so rudely interrupted, was not resumed. Mr. Blow was in no state for an argument. He sighed and groaned, and com-

plained of his hard fate continually. Mrs. Weekhart did her best to comfort him, assuring him that she possessed a competence for both, and Mr. Nophath listened to his childish petulance with silent disgust. So the day passed and toward night they arrived at a small village in the midst of the prairie, Hillsborough by name, and stopped at the hotel.

Mr. Blow, before eating or resting, proceeded at once to hunt up a magistrate and lodge information of the robbery, and was little comforted by being told that there were already several warrants out for the arrest of the desperado, which hitherto had proved an impossibility.

It was soon noised abroad through the village that the late arrival was the great evangelist whose preaching had created so great a sensation in the neighboring town; and Mr. Blow had time scarcely to eat his supper before several of the prominent persons of the place called to pay their respects. One of these, a very earnest religious man, as appeared by his conversation, urged Mr. Blow very strongly to remain some days in Hillsborough, and hold a few meetings, representing that the town was almost entirely deprived of religious privileges, and very great good might be accomplished. Mr. Blow hesitated. He did not know whether he could afford the time. His engagements were very pressing. He feared that the citizens would hardly feel able to devote time and means enough to the services to make them successful. After a good deal of discussion, he said that as he had just met so great a loss on the road, a loss which seriously interfered with his ability to travel, if the citizens of the town would raise a subscription large enough to partially indemnify him, he thought perhaps he might arrange to stay a week. Mr. Givenot, to whom this proposal was made, answered that the town was very small

and the crops bad; he thought that it would be impossible to raise such a subscription. But perhaps they might raise twenty dollars. "Well," said Mr. Blow, "it is a matter of no consequence at all. I never mention money matters, nor care whether I receive anything for my labors. I only spoke of it now, for the first time in my long career, because I have not cash enough to pay my necessary expenses. The consciousness of doing good is reward enough for me. I suppose there is a bank here where I can get a draft cashed? In that case I am all right."

Mr. Givenot answered that there was no bank, but that he himself would be happy to take his draft, as he needed a little exchange just then. Mr. Blow presently produced a check-book, but after some show of writing in it, put it up again, and remarked that he thought he could get along till he arrived in Waco. Mr. Givenot then urged him still more to stay, offering to advance him any cash he might be in need of and depicting vividly the good that might accomplished. But Mr. Blow remained immovable in his resolution to go on.

"At least," said Mr. Givenot, as he rose to leave, "you will preach for us to-morrow; since it is the Sabbath, of course you will not travel, and will give us a couple of sermons."

"I am sorry," answered Mr. Blow, "that I cannot gratify you. My engagement in Waco is very pressing, and it pains me to think that perhaps souls may be lost through my already too long delay. I must go on to-morrow. 'The Sabbath was made for man.' Our Savior sometimes traveled on the Sabbath, and I cannot think it wrong, considering the good I hope to do, to follow his example."

The carriage was at the door early the next morning, and our travelers in it, and ready to start, when the host, who had followed Mr. Blow out, remarked:

"Excuse me, parson. But I reckon you forgot to settle your bill."

"Bill!" answered Mr. Blow with an air of astonishment, "no, but I understood that it was settled!"

"No, sir, but I always give reduced rates to parsons. I shall charge you a dollar, and a dollar and a half for the lady, a dollar for the team, and four bits for the driver—four dollars."

"Thank you," said Mr. Blow. "Mr. Givenot spoke to me about it last night and said not to give myself any trouble about the bill, that he would arrange it with you. I am astonished that he did not speak to you about it."

"O, that's all right, sir," responded the host. "If Mr. Givenot said so, that's all right. He forgot to mention it to me; just be kind enough to wait a moment till I step down and ask him about it. Of course it's all right. I'll be back in a moment."

The host disappeared around the corner.

"Drive on," said Mr. Blow. "He will find it all right, and it is useless for us to lose time." So off they drove.

They had not gone far however—perhaps a couple of miles—when a sharp sound of hoofs followed them, and presently mine host, with a revolver belted around his waist, and his face exceedingly red, drew rein beside the carriage, and said sharply: "Look here, parson, that thing won't do. Hand over that money, will you? Four dollars and four bits. Don't want any fuss about it, but you can't beat me."

Mr. Blow assumed a look of righteous indignation. "Did Mr. Givenot refuse to pay the money? Impossible! He promised positively to do so last night."

"Well, he says it's a lie; that he didn't promise to pay your bill, or anything else, and won't pay. So you'll have to come down with the cash."

"This is very unfortunate," said Mr. Blow in a per-

plexed manner; "I did not think Mr. Givenot would treat me so. You know, sir, that we were robbed yesterday of every cent we had, and you ought to consider the good work we are engaged in, and make no charge for so trifling a matter as one night's lodging."

Mine host answered doggedly:

"I can't help your being robbed! I've got to live. You owe me four dollars and a half, and I want it right now."

"Impossible," said Mr. Blow, "I have no money, I tell you. If you must have it I will send it to you from Waco."

"All right! Then I'll take your trunk till I get it. I don't allow no credit to parties I don't know."

Here Mr. Nophath, who had so far looked on with a quiet smile playing round his mouth, interfered.

"Never mind, Tom. Just charge it to me. Mr. Blow can pay me the money when we get to Waco."

"All right, sir. Certainly, sir," answered the satisfied publican, and turning his rein was soon lost to sight on the road. Our travelers peacefully continued their journey, Mr. Blow and Mrs. Weekhart overwhelming their companion with thanks; and toward night, without having met any adventure worth noting they crossed the Brazos River and drove into the city of Waco.

CHAPTER XI

WHICH IS MERELY A CONTINUATION OF THE LAST: AS MAY BE SEEN BY READING IT

They drove first to a hotel, where Mr. Nophath and his baggage were set down, greatly to the relief of Mr. Blow and Mrs. Weekhart, who having inquired for the residence of the Rev. Mr. Sturmup, betook themselves thither in search of hospitality.

As the carriage stopped before the door the reverend gentleman was just coming out.

Mr. Blow put his head out of the carriage and inquired, "Does Mr. Sturmup live here?"

"Yes, sir; that is my name."

"I suppose you received my letter from Cleburne; Blow is my name, Rev. Abel Blow, A. B., the evangelist."

"Oh! Brother Blow, is it?" said Mr. Sturmup, coming out of the gate and stepping to the side of the carriage. "I am delighted to see you, sir. I had hoped you would be here to preach this morning. Have I the honor of meeting Mrs. Blow?"

Mrs. Weekhart blushed deeply, while Mr. Blow introduced her, and explained that she was a devoted sister who accompanied him in the capacity of singer. Mr. Sturmup was delighted to make Mrs. Weekhart's acquaintance, and said:

"Well, Brother Blow, you will preach for me tonight. A large congregation assembled to hear you this morning, and your failure to arrive was a great disappointment. I will call for you at the hotel directly after supper."

"I had hoped to find a more private place than the hotel. It is very disagreeable in my work to stop at a public house."

"That's true!" said Mr. Sturmup in a meditative way. "It would be pleasanter to be more private. I thought of that. I would be glad to entertain you myself, but I have—well, the fact is, that my wife's brother and sister with their families are making us a little visit, and our house is pretty full. So the best thing I could do was to secure rooms for you at the Metropolitical Hotel, which you will find very comfortable indeed, and quite convenient to the church. I will call for you early this evening. You must not disappoint the people." And Mr. Sturmup walked down the street with the satisfied manner of a man who has done his whole duty.

Mr. Blow looked after him a moment, with an air of disappointment and perplexity, but, as there was nothing else to do, our wayfarers started in quest of the establishment with the sonorous title, where their rooms were bespoken.

Punctual to his engagement Mr. Sturmup arrived at the hotel, before Mr. Blow and Mrs. Weekhart had finished their supper, and brought with him a brother minister of a sister denomination, who, as Mr. Sturmup explained, had kindly consented to give up his evening service that his congregation might enjoy the pleasure of listening to Mr. Blow.

Mr. Blow received them both most affectionately and humbly and expressed his hope that he might be able to do something to further the good work in which they were engaged. He proceeded to explain that never under any consideration did he allow himself to interfere in the slightest manner with the rights and duties of the settled ministry. He considered his efforts merely supplemental to theirs and always endeavored to work with them, and sustain them.

Of this both the ministers approved very highly. Mr. Blow went on to say that he never labored for a pecuniary consideration. Although poor in this world's goods, he never lowered himself to stipulate for any remuneration for his efforts. He preached a free gospel and was content to receive whatever free-will gifts the Lord put into the hearts of his people to offer. The ministers were greatly pleased and impressed with his great self-denial. After some time spent in conversation on these and kindred topics, Mr. Blow casually remarked to Mr. Sturmup:

"By the way, dear brother, there will be nothing to prevent our using your church for the meetings regularly, in case it should seem advisable to continue them for some time?"

"I think not," answered Mr. Sturmup, rather hesitatingly. "I think of nothing now."

"Unless I can be certain," said Mr. Blow decidedly, "I shall not begin them, for any change of place is very disastrous to the spiritual interests of the meetings, and, moreover, contrary to the Scripture, which says, 'Whatever house ye go into, stay there.'"

"O, there will be no trouble about the place," answered Mr. Sturmup quickly. "It's about time we were starting to church." At this remark Mrs. Weekhart went to her room to prepare herself.

Mr. Blow went on:

"You consent then that I shall have the use of the church without interference as long as I think proper to continue the meetings?"

"Why, of course," said Mr. Sturmup, "provided—"

"I cannot begin on any uncertainty, I must be sure that the meetings will not suffer any interruption," and Mr. Blow resumed his seat.

"But surely, Brother Blow, you will preach to-night, and we can arrange the matter afterward. You have been announced, and the people are very anxious to hear you."

"Impossible, sir! When I begin I must go on. If you disappoint the people and delay the work of the Spirit, it is your own responsibility. I did not anticipate any unwillingness to admit the gospel into the house of God."

Mr. Sturmup was in a quandary. He dared not disappoint his people, to whom he had spoken highly of Mr. Blow's eloquence and devotion, nor did he care to face the odium of having refused the use of his church for what might prove a great revival; and on the other hand he did not like to relinquish the control of the church, as Mr. Blow demanded, for an indefinite time, nor did he know how the lay authorities of the congregation would be disposed to view such action. Anxious to gain time, again he urged Mr. Blow to preach for the nonce, and settle the other matter the next morning, but Mr. Blow positively refused.

"I do not see, Brother Sturmup," put in the other minister, "why you hesitate about Brother Blow's request. I would gladly tender him the use of my church." The said church was a little affair, seating some one hundred persons. Mr. Sturmup answered:

"I merely desired to consult the deacons first, and make some arrangement with the choir. But as Brother Blow seems to view the matter as of so much importance, I will yield the point at once."

"Ah, very well," said Mr. Blow. "You are very kind. Shall we proceed to church?"

The "church" to which they proceeded was a large brick house, built in the common meeting-house style of architecture—that is, on the outside it looked as much as possible like a market-house, and on the inside like a court-house furnished with pews. When the evangelist and his company arrived the congregation was fast assembling. Mr. Blow marched pompously up between the rows of curious faces,

with Mrs. Weekhart on his arm, preceded by Mr. Sturmup and followed by Mr. Small. As they reached the head of the alley Mrs. Weekhart paused.

"Come on, sister; don't be bashful," said the evangelist.

"Don't you think," she suggested, "that we had better sit here, at least till after the ceremony?"

Mr. Blow looked at her in astonishment:

"Of course not," he said. "That would be highly improper."

"But I don't understand," she urged in a whisper, "how to go through the ceremony up there. Please let us stay here till it's over."

"No; you must overcome your nervousness. You will soon get used to it; come!" And Mr. Blow mounted the judge's stand, yclept platform, and seated himself on the nicely upholstered sofa, placing Mrs. Weekhart on his right hand (where she sat in a state of blushing expectancy), and motioning Mr. Sturmup to a seat on his left. Mr. Small took a chair to the right of Mrs. Weekhart. Presently a fussily-dressed, bustling little man descended from a gallery at the further end of the meeting-house, and with an air of vast importance approached the pulpit and whispered tragically to Mr. Sturmup, who at once rose and said loud enough to be heard by half the congregation:

"Mr. Blow, allow me to introduce Mr. Hitenor, the leader of the choir. Mr. Hitenor, Mr. Blow, the evangelist." Mr. Hitenor grasped Mr. Blow's hand with great fervor and seated himself by his side in Mr. Sturmup's place.

Said he: "I am delighted to have the honor, sir." Mr. Blow was pleased to meet him.

"I wished to ask, sir," continued Mr. Hitenor, "if you have any particular preference as to the hymn before sermon. We select the first and last hymns

for ourselves, as they are rather indifferent. But we are glad to be accommodating with regard to the other, if possible. Mr. Sturmup usually has no preference, but if you would like to have the hymn in accord with the sermon, perhaps you will indicate one; or if you will tell me the text, I will select something suitable. How will 'Jesus, Lover of My Soul' do? That goes beautifully to the tune of 'When the Swallows Homeward Fly.' Or perhaps you would like, 'Lord, in the Morning.' I have an elegant setting to that from *Fra Diavolo*."

"Excuse me, Mr. Hitenor," answered Mr. Blow, "but I prefer to have the singing done by my companion, Mrs. Weekhart, who accompanies me for that purpose. She will select the hymns, and lead them, and be kind enough to say to the organist that we will dispense with her services to-night. Instrumental music, I find, is rather a hindrance to the Spirit's work."

Mr. Hitenor grew very red, and arose to his feet with great dignity:

"Certainly, sir," he said with a stiff bow. "Just as you please, sir;" and marched back to the choir, where his report created such intense displeasure, that only the curiosity of the ladies prevented the choir's leaving in a body.

The meeting-house gradually filled, and meanwhile Mrs. Weekhart's embarrassment grew, and finally changed into anxiety as time elapsed, and no step was taken with regard to the ceremony that she was awaiting. She was merged into a state of wondering bewilderment when at last Mr. Blow arose and began to address the assembly.

Mr. Blow, utterly unconscious of her expectations, was only intent upon circumventing Mr. Sturmup and making himself master of the situation. So when in his judgment the opportune moment had arrived,

he stood up and deliberately stepping to the front of the platform, said:

"Dear Sisters and Brethren: It is now a long time that I have desired to see you eye to eye, and speak with you face to face. The spirit that is in me has pressed me, saying, 'Go to Waco. There is a great work for you to do there. There is a rich harvest for you to reap there. There are many souls to be saved there.' Led by this guiding I have longed to come to you; I have toiled for it; I have prayed for it; and at last the way was opened. So I wrote of my coming to my dear Brother Sturmup, your beloved and devoted shepherd. He has doubtless told you of my coming, and of the work I hope to do among you. He has given me freely and nobly the use of this church for my meetings as long as it shall please the Holy Spirit to pour out himself upon us. And He will do it; yes, I feel he will do it (growing violent in delivery). I am poor, brethren, poor in this world's goods, yet I ask for no payment for my labors. I fell among thieves on the road, who robbed me of all that I possessed. (Pathetically) Alas, that such things can be, in a Christian and civilized country! Yet I ask you for nothing. The collections that will be taken up at these meetings are rather that you may cultivate your Christian liberality than that I desire anything. 'The Lord loveth a cheerful giver.' 'It is better to give than to receive.' And I give myself for you. It is your souls I aim at, let who will aim at your pockets. Alas, I know (with great agony) that many of your souls are lost, almost in hell now! I will snatch them out. I can snatch them out as I have done for many thousands. We must have the Spirit poured out. Brother Small, pray for the Spirit."

Mr. Blow sat down precipitately and covered his face with his pocket handkerchief while Mr. Small offered a prayer.

By the time the prayer was finished, Mrs. Weekhart's feelings had reached a state that can better be understood than described. Utter bewilderment, a keen sense of personal slight and injury, bitter disappointment, indignation, and anxiety, struggled in her heart for the mastery; and nothing but her womanly pride restrained her bursting into a flood of tears. As it was she could scarcely control herself when Mr. Blow announced that his dear sister Weekhart would sing to the congregation one of her sweet, spiritual songs. She managed, however, to check her tears; and after tremblingly turning over her book a moment, laid aside her bonnet, and standing up sung—

"A long time I wandered in darkness and sin,
And wondered if ever the light would shine in.
I heard Christian friends tell of raptures divine,
And wished—how I wished! that their Savior were mine.
I wished he were mine, yes, I wished he were mine,
I wished—how I wished—that their Savior were mine!"

She sang two verses with great feeling, especially dwelling on the chorus with pathetic emphasis. The second verse concluded—

"I hoped he were mine, yes, I hoped he were mine."

She was about to begin the third verse, when her eye fell on the chorus—

"I know he is mine, yes, I know he is mine."

She hesitated, and with the tears forcing their way from her eyes, sat down.

Mr. Blow looked at her a moment in perplexity, not understanding her but too-apparent agitation, then, laying it to bashfulness, he stepped to the pulpit, and opening the Bible at random he began to read the twenty-third chapter of the Prophet Ezekiel. The patient reader is supposed to possess a Bible, which presumption makes unnecessary the transcription of the matter read. Mr. Blow seemed to find it very hard reading: he stumbled through

a few verses, stammering and hesitating, and mumbling the words, and presently concluded abruptly, with the announcement that he would read a selection from the New Testament. He whirled over the leaves of the Bible, and finding what looked like a useful place began to read the seventh chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. He had not gotten very far into this chapter when the same difficulty of speech overtook him, and presently he concluded the selection in the midst of the chapter, and asked Mr. Sturmup to offer prayer. Mr. Sturmup did so; and supposing that the selections read by Mr. Blow had been designedly chosen as having special reference to the subject of his sermon, he followed up the general subject suggested by them as nearly as he dared, and could, in vague expressions, much to Mr. Blow's annoyance.

After the prayer, Mrs. Weekhart, who had succeeded in forcing herself to some degree of composure, sang quite touchingly:

"Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on his gentle breast," etc.

Mr. Blow then arose and announced his text, which was the twelfth verse of the seventh Psalm, beginning, "If he will not turn," etc.

The congregation had hitherto been passive. Mr. Blow's prefatory remarks had been heard with some interest, but the readings from the Scriptures had evidently been attended to by very few, and the prayers patiently endured. Even Mrs. Weekhart's musical efforts had elicited but a faint sign of approbation from the upturned faces (a feeling not at all shared in the gallery, however, where her performance was audibly pronounced "horrid" by more than one female critic). But when Mr. Blow began speaking, the pews made an evident effort to bring them-

selves *en rapport* with him. A general settling of position took place, and the crowded rows of faces wore a look of intelligent attention.

Mr. Blow felt encouraged, and threw himself into the sermon. Soon the attention of the listeners passed into interest, the interest into approbation and the approbation—which expressed itself in sundry ejaculations—into silent and intense excitement. Not a soul in the house but felt the influence of the nervous spell that throbbed throughout the closely packed crowd. Higher and still higher swelled the tide of feeling until, near the close of the sermon, a lady near the pulpit gave a scream and fainted away. The scream was re-echoed all over the audience, and was followed by great confusion. As the lady was carried out, some wept, some laughed hysterically, some prayed aloud, one or two began singing, and a great number crowded toward the "mourners' bench."

Amidst the tumult, Mr. Blow finished the sermon, shouting at the top of his voice, walking frenziedly back and forth on the platform, and gesticulating in the most violent manner. The sermon ended, Mrs. Weekhart, whose excitable nature had lost all personal feeling in the intensity of the general emotion, sang "Come to Jesus" in her very best style, while the collection was taken up. The amount collected surpassed Mr. Blow's most sanguine expectations; and as the overflowing plates were placed upon the pulpit, he turned to Mr. Sturmup and cried—"O my dear brother, God rewards the self-denying efforts of his servants. See how the Spirit is poured out! Follow up the advantage. Exhort them to come out on the Lord's side."

Mr. Sturmup wanted no second invitation. Nervous and excitable, he was longing for an opportunity to let loose his feelings; and springing to his feet, he

poured forth an exhortation which, if inferior to Mr. Blow's sermon in force and elegance, was not a whit behind it in vehemence and unctuousness, and produced an immense effect in increasing the enthusiasm of the hearers. Songs, exhortations, prayers and conversions followed until a late hour, and when the meeting finally broke up, with the understanding that it was to be continued every night of the ensuing week, some twenty had professed religion, and the evangelist and his assistants were utterly exhausted.

Mr. Blow retired to his room and was engaged in counting over the collection, when he heard a gentle knock on the door, and Mrs. Weekhart entered. She looked pale and worn, with manifest traces of tears in her eyes, but she was composed and dignified.

Mr. Blow, embarrassed and astonished, rose to receive her, hesitating how to understand her visit.

"Sit down!" she said in an imperative tone, pausing in the middle of the floor. He obeyed. She went on:

"I want to ask you, Mr. Blow, what you mean, sir, by this strange treatment of me? Don't speak! Wait till I am done! What do you mean by trifling with me in this manner? I trusted you. I threw myself wholly upon you. I compromised myself, because I had faith in your nobility and truth. How else would I have ventured to come with you alone so far from my home, and my natural protector? When you told me that our marriage would be consummated as soon as we arrived here, I believed you and trusted you; and how have you treated me? Do you think that I love you so well that I will endure any indignity you may please to offer me? (struggling with her tears) No! I will appeal to my brother. He will not see me

outraged. I trusted you, I frankly gave you my heart, and you treat it like a plaything. What love have you given me in return, that you have never spoken one affectionate word since our engagement? I won't be treated so! I won't be! You have gone too far now, and you shall marry me at once or my brother shall know why?" Here she burst into tears.

Mr. Blow was confounded and alarmed. He arose and took her by the hand, an advance that she angrily repelled.

"Keep your distance, sir," she exclaimed, "or I will arouse the house."

Mr. Blow sat down and said:

"My dear Mrs. Weekhart, you astonish me. I don't understand you. I have made you no offer of marriage, nor spoken once about affection. It is impossible for me to marry you, as you must perceive, when you remember my family—"

Mrs. Weekhart broke in, furiously:

"So you will deny the engagement as if it was not publicly made at Mr. Worthy's table before the whole family!—I have witnesses. They all understood you clearly, and Mrs. Worthy overheard every word that passed between us in the parlor afterward."

"Indeed," answered Mr. Blow. "You have certainly made a serious mistake. I made no offer of marriage—I merely invited you to take Mr. Smith's office as singer. The Worthys certainly understood me."

"Yes, they understood you. You asked me to cast in my lot with you and share your life's labors. No one could misunderstand that. And even had you not been half so explicit there was no possible construction to be put upon your offer, except that it was a proposal. You certainly would not expect any lady to accompany you about the country except as your wife. They understood you and urged me to insist

upon our being married at my home. What are you going to do now? Do you think to deceive me and spurn my love?"

Mrs. Weekhart's voice trembled again. Mr. Blow showed himself deeply affected; after a pause he said:

"But what can I do? Consider my family."

"What family? You told me that you had been married, but that your wife and children were dead. Those were your very words. Isn't that so?"

Mr. Blow was silent; he remembered endeavoring to leave that impression on her mind. She went on:

"And if that is true, none of your relatives have a right to interfere. My family is as good as any. I am not old, nor ugly, nor poor. What objection can any one make to our marriage?"

Mr. Blow assured her that no one alive could possibly find any objection to her.

"Well," she said, "what will you do? You have compromised me too far to draw back. If you do not marry me, I am disgraced; and you know it."

Mr. Blow answered:

"I am very much perplexed. I had no thought of marriage. I assure you, on my honor, I did not. I did not suppose it possible that you could love me! I dared not presume so high. You are young and beautiful and wealthy, and I am but an unknown evangelist. But if I might hope—" rising and approaching her.

"Please sit down," she said, "you must not touch me."

Mr. Blow reseated himself, and continued: "If I might hope to be worthy of such a wife I should be the happiest man in the world." Mrs. Weekhart burst into tears.

"O, what shall I do! I wish I were dead! You don't care for me."

"My darling! I love you. I adore you. I have

worshiped you from the first moment I saw you. Pray believe me, and don't cry. May I hope to marry you?" again he rose.

"Sit down! Don't come near me! I have gone too far already! I ought not to be here. But I felt that I must know what your intentions really were. I thought you had deceived me. When are we to be married?"

"My love, it won't be possible right away. It would entirely break up our meeting for us to be married now. And we can't afford that, for it promises to pay very handsomely—I mean—we are likely to do a great deal of good. But it shall be as soon as possible without injury to the souls we are striving to save. Will that content you?"

Mrs. Weekhart professed herself contented and ready to defer to his judgment, and so retired to her room.

CHAPTER XII

WHEREIN MAY BE SEEN THE EVANGELIST IN THE CAPACITY OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

When Mr. Blow came down to breakfast on the following morning he was glad to find that his fair companion was not at the table. He ate hastily in order to be through before she came down, in which design he was successful. When he had finished his hurried meal he donned his hat and was about to go out to look at the town, when a gentleman came in and asked for him. Mr. Blow was just passing through the office at that moment, and, turning, was introduced to Mr. Oppenhaus. This gentleman was a portly, frank-faced individual with a slight German accent. He bowed to Mr. Blow with reverent courtesy, and entered into an elaborate apology for himself, and his fellow-townsmen in general, that Mr. Blow and his companion had been permitted to put up at the hotel, which apology he wound up by inviting the evangelist to make a home of his house during his stay in Waco, and presenting a similar invitation from his sister to Mrs. Weekhart.

Mr. Blow, with much outward condescension and inward rejoicing, accepted both invitations, and the two sat down to await Mrs. Weekhart's appearance.

It was half past ten before that lady had finished her breakfast, after which Mr. Oppenhaus insisted upon settling their bills himself, to which Mr. Blow interposed a feeble resistance, and then conveyed them in a carriage to his house, which stood not far from

the church, his sister's being a few doors off. Most of the day was spent by Mr. Blow in receiving company. Several ministers called to express their pleasure at his coming, and assure him of their approval of, and co-operation in his work. Mr. Sturmup spent several hours with him, remaining to dinner. After dinner, Mr. Oppenhaus and his sister took Mr. Blow, Mrs. Weekhart and Mr. Sturmup to drive through the city and vicinity. After a sumptuous supper, all went to church. The meeting was, with unimportant variations, a repetition of Sunday night's performance. Mr. Blow preached, if anything, with more vigor. Mrs. Weekhart sang with increased spirit, the enthusiasm ran higher, the conversions were more numerous, the collection larger, and Mr. Blow retired to his bed, at midnight, exultantly happy, though extremely wearied.

A history like the present necessarily presupposes in its author a species of clairvoyance. He must be able to hear soliloquies uttered in the profoundest solitude, to see acts performed in the strictest secrecy, and even to read unuttered thoughts, and discern hidden purposes, of which the subjects themselves are half unconscious. How else could any truthful account of such subjects be given? The reader will not therefore think it strange if here he find the innermost workings of our hero's mind disclosed, and read the half-formed thoughts of his head upon his bed:

"I have done well to-day and yesterday. One hundred odd dollars in two days is good business; and how delightful to think that my own good fortune is likewise a blessing to sinful souls. Nearly fifty persons have already been converted by my labors. How good is God to bless me so! But he can not refuse a blessing where one labors for it so unselfishly as I do. I have wonderful talent for this work. There is scarce such another preacher as I in the

country. Spurgeon's sermons! Yes, but the delivery is the great thing—that is the whole of it. None of these fools of ministers here could produce the effect with them that I do. I am a genius! How they hang on my lips. Strange I did not find my vocation earlier! I might have been rich long ago. But if the meetings hold out as they have begun I shall be well-off before long. I won't preach any more in small places—country people are too stingy, and they can't appreciate my talents. It don't pay. Hannah is rich, and if I marry her I won't need to continue preaching. What shall I do about it? Poor Lucy! I wonder how she is getting along. I reckon she is all right! She can sew, and the people won't let her starve. It was not wrong for me to leave her—for so noble an object. I don't think a man ought to live with a woman when she only makes him miserable. She can never find me, and nobody that knows me as an evangelist can suppose or would dare hint that I was a married man. Smith knows it, but he will not break faith. Besides, he is gone—nobody knows where. I suppose I'll have to marry Hannah. I'm not to blame about it anyway. She throws herself at me, and threatens me with her brother. I believe the scoundrel would as lief shoot me as not. Well, nobody could ask a better wife. Rich, tractable, young, and *so* pretty—isn't she sweet! How ripe her lips are! What a plump round hand and arm!" etc., etc. With these reflections Mr. Blow's tired senses floated off into dream-land, carrying with them these last thoughts in the shape of enticing visions.

On the following morning Mr. Blow had a great many visitors. Between the hours of nine and twelve there was scarcely a moment in which from three or four to a dozen were not in the parlor. Among the rest was a young man in flashy attire who had been one of the converts of the night before. He

had called early and stayed long, evidently in the hope of seeing Mr. Blow alone. At length he arose and approaching Mr. Blow, bent down and in a stage whisper said:

"May I see you alone a moment? I have some very important business to speak about."

"Certainly," answered Mr. Blow, "certainly;" and excusing himself to the company, conducted the young man to his bedroom. When they were seated the young man said, after a pause, embarrassed on his side and interrogative on Mr. Blow's:

"I want to consult you about my duty. I owe my conversion to you, and as I confessed in public last night I am determined to lead a Christian life. What ought I to do?"

"Well, sir," responded Mr. Blow, "you had better consult a minister about that. I do not profess to give any but the most general religious advice. I am called merely to awaken souls—"

"But I would rather have your advice. You led me to belief, and I want to follow you. Besides, the ministers give such contrary opinions that one cannot tell which to trust. Please advise me."

"Well, since you earnestly desire it, I may depart from my rule in your case. But of course anything that may pass between us is strictly confidential, for I do not wish any of the ministers here to suppose that I am—"

"Certainly, sir; I understand."

After a pause Mr. Blow went on:

"It is usual in such cases to have a consultation fee. I merely mention it as a matter of form. It is of no great consequence."

The young man looked embarrassed, and putting his hand into his pocket said, "How much is it?"

"O! anything you like," answered Mr. Blow indifferently—"It is a merely professional form."

"Will that be enough?" asked the youth, depositing two silver dollars on the table.

"O, certainly. Thank you," said Mr. Blow, pocketing the money. "Now if you will mention the points on which you desire advice."

"What must I do to be a Christian?"

"Do? You must have faith; that is the all-important thing."

"Yes, but what must I *do?*"

"Have faith! nothing more; all works are vain. We are justified by faith only."

" I do not mean what works I must do. I know that all works are sinful. But what are a Christian's duties? What church must I join?"

"Well, on that point, since you ask my advice, I would say, none. Churches are mere human inventions and are not mentioned in the Scripture. It never tells of Presbyterians or Methodists or Baptists or Congregationalists, but only of Christians. Churches are hindrances to Christian unity and good feeling. Every church is organized on some error, and that error is bigoted and exclusive. If these errors were all abolished the churches would be abolished. And the time of that great desideratum is rapidly drawing near, when the universal suffrage of untrammeled Christian feeling shall declare, in no uncertain tones, that all denominational lines shall be obliterated with the besom of Destruction—all denominational and sectarian dogmas and principles forever buried in the ocean of Oblivion, and naught remain but the pure and simple Gospel, the true religion of the Bible. If you join a church you oppose by so much the inevitable, and hinder the free course of God's will. I advise you not to join any church. Is there anything else?"

"Do you not think it necessary for me to be baptized or go to communion?"

"Well, I don't know. It is well enough if you think it would help you in any way, but as you have already received the baptism of the Spirit, I don't know that a little water can do you any good."

"But does not the Bible say that baptism is a saving ordinance?"

"No, sir. Some, like the Roman Catholics, represent it so, but they thus misinterpret the Scripture in the interests of priestcraft. All passages which speak of baptism as having any saving power must be understood of Spirit-baptism—that is, conversion or regeneration—and as for the communion, it is a mere rite, and rather formal than otherwise. I have never thought it necessary for my own good, and cannot advise it for yours. Keep your religion as spiritual and free from formalism as possible, for we must worship God in spirit and in truth. I think there is a danger even in saying your prayers at set times. It is so apt to degenerate into a habit—a mere habit. Pray when and how the Spirit moves you; that is my advice. Is there any other point on which you desire light?"

The young man could think of none, so Mr. Blow led the way back to the parlor.

He had hardly resumed his seat when a gentleman whom he had left in the parlor when he went out with the young man, said:

"I would be glad of a few words with you in private, Mr. Blow, if it be no intrusion."

"It will afford me pleasure," answered the evangelist. "Just step into my room." When they were closeted together the gentleman said:

"I am not what you call a believer, but I have been anxious to ask you some questions on religious matters."

"I don't desire any controversy," answered the evangelist sharply. "It is not my business to controvert with unbelievers."

"Nor do I desire controversy," said the other. "I am seeking for light. I have been trying to get religion for ten years. I have been attending church, and going to camp-meetings and revivals constantly. Yet I can not find any light, but seem to get deeper into darkness. I heard your sermon last night and the night before, and concluded that you could help me if anybody could, and for that reason I desired an interview."

Mr. Blow repeated his remarks about a consultation fee.

"Ah!" answered the gentleman, "I did not know that your profession and mine agreed in that particular. But it's all right." And he laid down five dollars. "Is that satisfactory?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Blow, taking the money.

The gentleman continued: "I want to ask you why I can not experience what is commonly called 'getting religion.' I believe in the Bible, I believe in God and in Christianity, I am not conscious of living in any sin, and I have long tried to get religion, but it seems that I cannot. What is the matter?"

Mr. Blow reflected a moment, and then said: "Probably you lack faith—living faith."

"What is faith, in your sense of the word?"

"Faith is belief—trust. A child has faith in its father; a man has faith in his friends. Faith is the hand by which we grasp God's."

"I believe! I believe in the existence and power of God. I believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God. I believe his incarnation and suffering and death and resurrection; that he established the Christian religion for the salvation of all men. What more faith do I need?"

"You need a faith to give yourself to God—to cast yourself wholly upon Him and trust Him to save you —a faith that can enter the very divine presence and lay hold upon the infinite mercies."

"Well, but how can I get into His presence? Where shall I find Him? By what means obtain the salvation that I know He worked out for me? I want some title-deed—some assurance that my own sins are washed away, and that I am accepted with God. That is the meaning of getting religion is it not? How can I get it?"

"The assurance that you speak of comes only by the Spirit. You must be converted and become as a little child. The Spirit is only to be obtained by faith and prayer, and sheds himself abroad through such humble instruments as I. If you attend our meetings faithfully and prayerfully you cannot fail of a blessing. I am destined, I feel, to save many souls here."

The gentleman sat a few minutes in despondent silence, then said:

"Can you not assure me that my sins are forgiven? Is there no power in absolution or sacraments to really cleanse the soul? The Bible reads as though there were. O! I would give all I am worth, to know that I am saved."

"I can assure you of this, that if you will believe you shall be saved. Salvation is full enough and free enough and sovereign enough to include every sinner such as you. But there is nothing that can assure a soul of salvation but the Spirit in his heart."

"How may I know when I have the Spirit?"

"Know! You *must* know by the effects. If a man has been drinking how do you know it? He laughs and shouts and sings. So the Spirit in your heart cannot be hid. You must feel it."

"But how does it feel? Perhaps I may have had it and failed to recognize it, not knowing what to expect."

"Impossible! It cannot be mistaken. It makes itself felt. It works an assurance of its blessed pres-

ence and mighty workings that can never be confounded with anything else. I am sure you will experience it ere long, if you attend the meetings faithfully. Is there anything else you would like to consult me about? We must be brief, for I am staying away too long from the company."

"No, sir," said the other, "I believe not. But I cannot understand why, since God established a religion to bring salvation to all sorts and conditions of men, He did not give it real power in some definite way to take away sin, and assure people of its blessings—but left all that to a secret feeling of one's heart. I am a lawyer, sir, and human law does not leave a man's guilt or innocence, his rights, privileges or duties, to be determined by his subjective feelings. When I enter a suit in court, if I gain it, I get a writ of judgment."

Mr. Blow made no answer, but said:

"Well, sir, if you are ready, we will return to the parlor."

When they entered the parlor they found the company all gone except one lady, and as the lawyer made his adieu immediately, Mr. Blow was left alone with her.

"I am very glad," she said at once, "to have an opportunity to speak privately with you, for I know that so pure and holy a man would not deceive me, and I am anxious to consult you about a matter of private duty."

Mr. Blow was rather tired of giving private advice, and said:

"My dear madam, you had better consult Mr. Sturmup, or some other worthy minister. My profession is not to counsel individuals, but to convert souls."

The lady, however, persisted and begged him to hear her.

"Well, madam," he said, "in that case, I shall have to charge you a consultation fee. I never give private advice under any other consideration. The fee is five dollars."

The lady was taken considerably aback, and asked if he would trust her until the next day, as she had no money with her. Mr. Blow assented, and she said:

"The matter about which I want to ask you is this: I am a married woman, and have four children, but my husband is very disagreeable to me; I am not happy in my home, and I want to leave him. But I am a Christian, and do not want to do wrong. Do you think it would be right for me to go?"

"Does your husband have the same feelings toward you?"

"No, I think not. He seems very fond of me."

"Does he ill-treat you in any way?"

"O dear no! He is as kind as he can be. He gives me everything I want. And that only makes me dislike him the more. We are utterly incompatible!"

"What is the incompatibility? Do you disagree on religious questions?"

"No. He is a very pious man, in his way. But he don't talk to me—hardly ever. When he is at home, he reads, and reads. He is ready enough to talk to anybody else; and besides, his attentions are very unpleasant to me. I can't be happy with him."

"Have you felt so toward him always?"

"No, I loved him, I thought, when we were first married."

"How long have you had this feeling of dislike to him."

"Several months; since January, perhaps."

"Can you assign any cause for it? Has anything come between you?"

"No!—well, perhaps—I can't say—but possibly it might be. Don't ask me that question!"

"But how is it possible for me to advise you unless I know all the circumstances?"

"But can you not tell me whether it is right to leave my husband?"

"No—for that depends on the circumstances."

"Well, I will tell you all, if you will solemnly promise never to mention it."

"Certainly, I promise."

"On your honor, before God?"

"Yes."

"Well, then; I thought I loved my husband, and was happy with him until I met a gentleman, last winter, with whom I did really fall in love. I couldn't help it. One can't control one's affections. I then realized I had never loved my husband, but only endured him. You can't imagine how unhappy I am! This gentleman urges me to elope with him, but I don't want to do wrong. Do you think it would be very wrong?"

"Why not get a divorce? I don't think I would elope; it would merely cause an unnecessary scandal. A divorce in legal shape would be far better."

"I'm afraid a divorce would not be granted me. Mr.—that is, the gentleman—says it is very doubtful, and that it would merely be an unnecessary delay anyway. Do you think it would be so very wrong to go?"

Mr. Blow walked the floor meditatively.

"Well," said he, "the Scriptures' teaching on that point is very indefinite. In one place it allows a writing of divorcement, and in another place, if I remember rightly, it says that a woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives; but that seems to treat the legal rather than the gospel side of the question. On the whole, it seems to me a

matter that each one's conscience must determine for itself. So that I would advise—that is, if you are perfectly convinced that you cannot longer live happily with your husband and would be happy with this other gentleman—after all, happiness is the great thing. God desires our happiness before everything else—and if you would be happy so, and feel in your conscience that you are not doing wrong—"

The sudden entrance of Mrs. Weekhart and Miss Oppenhaus interrupted Mr. Blow, and, a moment after, Mrs. Oppenhaus came in to call them to dinner. She pressed the inquirer to take dinner with them, but the latter declined and departed.

CHAPTER XIII

WHICH RELATES SOME INSTRUCTIVE AND ENTERTAINING EPISODES THAT BEAR ON THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THIS RARE HISTORY

Days passed on and the meetings continued with unabated interest. Mr. Blow preached nightly and with great effect to crowded congregations, and the fruits of his labors, spiritually and financially, were such as to cause him no little satisfaction. Never in his life had he felt so entirely pleased with himself and his surroundings. He was sought after, petted and lionized to a degree that amazed him. The days were a succession of feasts and pleasures, the nights of gains and triumphs.

On the morning of the second day after the events recorded in the last chapter, the evangelist was waited upon by a company of four gentlemen who requested the honor of a private interview.

This request being granted, one of the party, a very tall and very thin gentleman, who wore his hair long and his face smooth-shaven, and possessed a wildly-staring eye, and a dramatic manner, took his station in the midst of the floor, in front of Mr. Blow, and after a profound bow thrust his right hand into his bosom, raised his left hand argumentatively, and said:

"Most reverend and eloquent Sir: We who are here present have the honor to be the Pious College of the Sub-apostolic Administrators of the Free United Reformed Catholic Church Protestant of the Simple Believers." He paused to give this announcement

its full effect, and Mr. Blow expressed great delight at meeting the gentlemen of the Pious College. The speaker continued:

"I, sir, though unworthy, have the distinguished honor to be the Quadrennial Grand Primate of the Pious College of Sub-apostolic Administrators of the Free United Reformed Catholic Church Protestant of the Simple Believers." He recited this title in a most solemn and deliberate style, and again paused.

Again Mr. Blow was openly delighted, with a secret wonder as to the meaning of it all.

"Possibly, sir," pursued the speaker, "you may never have heard of this Free United Reformed Catholic Church Protestant of the Simple Believers. In that case, as Quadrennial Grand Primate of the Pious College of Sub-apostolic Administrators, in the discharge of my office of light-bearer to the world, I shall be glad to enlighten you, before I proceed to the business that has brought the Pious College of the Sub-apostolic Administrators to your presence."

Mr. Blow would be very glad indeed to be informed.

"Sir, myself and certain friends, searching the Scriptures by the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit, or as I should properly say, the Comforter, discovered a truth which has been forgotten for ages, if, indeed, it were ever known; that is, that the Church of Jesus Christ must be and is essentially One. It cannot exist in dividuality. Unity is its singular characteristic. We looked abroad over the world and found that this unity was not there. Diversity is universal. We prayed for singular illumination for the restoration of this essential mark of God's work, and the Comforter spake to us in the secret of our hearts, and said, 'Unify.' This divine admonition we obeyed at once by drawing up the constitution of the Free United Reformed Catholic Church Prottestant of the Simple Believers, and electing the

Pious College of Sub-apostolic Administrators, of which I was appointed by the Comforter the first Quadrennial Grand Primate. You see, sir, at once, that we are the center of unity for christendom. When all Christians have abandoned their sinful divisions and united with us, the oneness of the truth will be declared to all the world, and there is no reason why they should not do so at once. We have no creed. We call upon all men to lay down their vain creeds. If they will make the simple confession, 'I believe; help Thou mine unbelief,' at once they are admitted to the rite of Enlightenment, whereby the truth enters into them and they into the truth, and receive the weekly washing of baptism, whereby they are purged and kept clean from every sin."

"Do you administer baptism every week?" asked Mr. Blow.

"Yes, sir. All who wish to remain in the singular unity of the Simple Believers must be baptized every Sabbath-day to be purged from all sin. The Scriptures plainly teach that sin is washed away by being buried with Christ beneath the waters of Jordan; therefore at great expense we procured enough of this water to fill a tank, in which every believer is immersed weekly. Thus we are kept pure from sin, and the gift of Enlightenment is preserved unbeclouded. But one must be enlightened before he or she can share that privilege."

I do not think I understand exactly what you mean by enlightenment."

"The Scripture says, that by the laying on of the Apostles' hands the Holy Ghost is given. The rite of Enlightenment, therefore, is the ceremony by which the Comforter is imparted to lead the Simple Believer into all truth. The Quadrennial Grand Primate of the Pious College of Sub-apostolic Administrators takes him who is willing to confess, 'I believe,

help Thou mine unbelief,' and lays his hands upon his eyes, his ears, his mouth, his hands and his feet: His eyes, that he may see the truth; his ears, that he may hear the truth; his mouth that he may speak the truth, his hands, that he may do the truth; his feet, that he may walk in the truth.

"Now, sir, if you are prepared, I will proceed, according to my high office as Quadrennial Grand Primate of the Pious College of Sub-apostolic Administrators, to administer apostolically to you the sacred rite of Enlightenment, after which I will proceed to the business which has brought us together—"

"Excuse me," answered Mr. Blow, "I am hardly prepared yet to receive the rite of Enlightenment. Perhaps it would be better to consider the business first, that I may have time to give the matter my undivided attention."

"We had hoped, most reverend and eloquent sir, that you would first consent to Enlightenment, lest without it your darkness prevent your discerning the path of singular unity and imperative duty. But as you prefer it, I will at once proceed to deliver the call of the Comforter. The blindness and error of man is so great that but few have found the Singular Unity of the Free Reformed United Catholic Church Protestant, and as we prayed for illumination, the Comforter said secretly in our hearts, 'Seek an eloquent evangelist who, after Enlightenment, may declare the Singular Unity to man.'

"The Pious College has heard you preach and has determined that you are the man designated by the Comforter. We therefore convened to bring you the Divine Call."

"I understand, then, sir, that you desire to secure my services as pastor of your denomination."

"So perhaps it would be called among the sects of division. Ours is not a denomination, but the Sin-

gular Unity. Your office, however, would be simply that of evangelist. Among us all ecclesiastical authority pertains to the Pious College, and is exercised by the Quadrennial Grand Primate."

"What—a—how much—a—that is, what are the pecuniary conditions of the office of evangelist?"

"The Pious College understood you, most eloquent sir, to state that you never stipulated a pecuniary consideration for your evangelistic efforts. But as we understood also that you were not rich in this world's goods, we concluded at our recent conclave, that we might be able to offer you fifty dollars a month, which, in our opinion, will be amply sufficient to meet all your necessities."

"Well, gentlemen," said Mr. Blow, "I thank you profoundly for the honor you have done me. But I shall need some time to weigh the matter thoroughly, and decide as to my duty. The unity of Christians is a subject that has long engrossed my thoughts and my prayers."

"But, most worthy evangelist, the Pious College is anxious that you should enter upon your sublime duties at once—that by transferring your labors, during the present state of popular feeling, to the Free United Reformed Catholic Church Protestant, many souls may be brought to the knowledge of the Singular Unity, and be led to receive the Enlightenment of the Comforter."

"You must admit, though, gentlemen, that such a step would be disastrous to the work in which I am at present engaged. The change which you propose would destroy the enthusiasm of my meetings at once, and many souls would be lost in consequence."

"I, sir, as Quadrennial Grand Primate, perceive by the illumination of the Comforter, that you are mistaken. Many more souls will be lost from ignorance of the Singular Unity, than from any change in the place

of your labors, which you also would perceive if you enjoyed the gift of Enlightenment. However, the Pious College will allow you to continue your meetings as they are, under the supervision of the Quadrennial Grand Primate, if you will consent to receive at once the rite of Enlightenment, and preach the Singular Unity of the Free United Reformed Catholic Church Protestant of the Simple Believers, under the illumination of the Comforter."

Mr. Blow protested that he could by no possibility make up his mind in so short a time; that he would give the matter full and careful consideration, and signify his conclusion to the Pious College in due order—with which assurance the Pious College was fain to be content, and retired.

As they were going out Mr. Sturmup entered:

" I see you have had a visit from the Roughedites, Mr. Blow." He said.

"Yes," answered Mr. Blow. "Do you know these gentlemen? What do you call them?"

"Roughedites. They are a sect established here a few years ago by Mr. Roughed, the one with the long hair."

"Have they a large membership?"

"No, not very large; at first they grew very rapidly, and threatened to absorb everything, but latterly they have fallen off very much."

"They seem to have some very peculiar opinions."

"Yes," answered Mr. Sturmup with a deep sigh; "it is strange what fanaticisms and absurdities men will run into when they abandon the established traditions of a pure Christianity."

"But they derive their doctrines from the Bible, do they not?"

"Certainly. But the Bible is full of darkness, sir, without the guide of authority. It is the word of God but it needs to be interpreted. The office of the church is to explain the Scripture."

"What particular church has that authority? As I look at it, none of our churches have traditions that go beyond the Reformation, and I do not see why Mr. Roughed has not as much right to his understanding of Scripture as Luther or Calvin had to theirs. The spirit of the Reformation, sir, was a breach with the false principle of authority in religious matters. Its object was to set men's minds free from slavery. Since then there is no such thing as authority. 'The Bible is the religion of Protestants;' and my interpretation is as good as yours. What tradition of weight can your church claim? It is no older than John Wesley. Was he inspired?"

"We had better not discuss this subject, Brother Blow," said Mr. Sturmup, "I fear we shall disagree. Will you walk out? I would like to show you Brother Jones' garden. It is quite a wonder."

A day or two after the occurrence last recounted Mr. Blow was engaged in a conversation in the street with some gentlemen, when the current of remark turned upon the Roman Church.

Mr. Blow was loud in his denunciation of its bigotry, idolatry, ignorance and priestcraft, and affirmed that he had long desired to meet a priest in open debate, but had found them uniformly afraid to defend their dogmas in public. "Ah!" said one of the gentlemen, "how fortunate! Here comes Father St. Clair now! Let me introduce him, Father St. Clair, allow me to introduce Rev. Mr. Blow, the evangelist. He wishes to have some conversation with you."

"I have great pleasure to know the gentleman," said the priest, bowing politely to Mr. Blow, "and shall find delight to converse with him."

"I am glad to meet you, sir," said Mr. Blow pompously, "and you will allow me, sir, to hope that you have experienced religion."

"The gentleman is very kind," answered the priest with another bow, "I thank him! I have the honor to be one religious, though very unworthy."

"You believe in the infallibility of the Pope, I understand, and worship images, and hold confessions."

"I have difficulty to understand the gentleman enough clearly. Has he desire to be instructed of the infallibility, or has he desire to be confessed?"

"I desire, sir, to show you your error and folly in belonging to the idolatrous Church of Rome. How can you presume to take the place of God by hearing confessions and pretending to give absolution for sins?"

"It seems that the gentleman has wish of having some dispute with me touching religious questions. If I have right to think so, I beg to excuse me, since I understand English enough badly: I will with pleasure talk to him in French."

"That is a mere subterfuge, sir. You are afraid to discuss your religion in public. If it is not so, tell me how you dare hear confessions?"

"I have not afraid, monsieur, to speak the truth always; but I have not desire to dispute, nor to offend with bad English. I wish monsieur much pleasure. Adieu." And the priest with a polite bow walked away.

"There, gentlemen," said Mr. Blow, "you see how it is. I have never been able to find one among them who would defend his faith. I challenge any priest in the United States to meet me in a public discussion. I have issued and published that challenge time and again, and never could get an answer from one. Their system is rotten at the core. Its corruption springs from the confessional, and infects the whole body."

"I hardly think, Mr. Blow," said one of the gentlemen present, "that you do Father St. Clair justice.

He is hardly able to sustain a conversation, to say nothing of an argument, in English. I would like to ask you a question or two about this matter."

"Certainly, sir," answered Mr. Blow, "I shall be glad to enlighten you as much as lies in my power."

"What is your great objection to confession?"

"Why, sir, its impurity."

"That, sir, is a point of practice and not of theology. All things are liable to be abused, and the confessional may be, sometimes; I myself think that its evil possibilities are greatly exaggerated. But leaving that aside, what theological objection have you to the confessional?"

"That it puts a man in the place of God; no man can forgive sins."

"But did not our Lord say to his apostles, 'Whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them?' How can one forgive sins until he knows what they are?"

"That passage has no reference to the subject of confessions."

"No? Don't you believe in the Bible?"

"I certainly do, sir."

"But don't you believe that it means what it says? If it says that a thing is black does it mean that it is white?"

"I do not see what bearing that remark has on the subject of confession. We were speaking about confession, sir. It is a soul-destroying snare—a deadening, stupefying thing—a superstitious, idolatrous and blasphemous thing. In my opinion one of the worst sins a man can commit is to go to confession. It is a sin against the Holy Ghost."

"But you must admit, sir, that the power to forgive sins, supposing it were intrusted to a man, carries with it, of necessity, the right to hear—even to require—confession?"

"Your supposition is impossible; the power to forgive sins could never be intrusted to a man."

"You admit then that these two things must go together?"

"No, sir! I admit nothing of the sort!"

"But why not? Can a physician prescribe for a case that he has not examined? Can a merchant square accounts that he has not looked into?"

"Of course not! But that has nothing to do with the question."

"I think it has. How could one heal a sin which he had not examined?"

"No one can heal a sin. The Scripture says, 'God only can forgive sins.'"

"But you cannot deny that if one had the power of absolution, he must by consequence have the right to hear confession?"

"Well, I suppose so. But what does that prove, since we *know* that no man has the power of absolution."

"Excuse me, sir, we know nothing of the sort. Our Lord said, and proved, that he, as a man, had power to forgive sins. That power he delegated in express terms to his apostles, and to my mind, any minister of the gospel who denies the existence of that power clearly shows that he has neither part nor lot in that ministry of which the apostles were the representatives."

Mr. Blow was about to reply with severe rebuke, when a brisk, sharp-faced young man who came along, stepped up to him with a look of recognition, and extending his hand exclaimed:

"Why, how are you, old fellow! How did you get here?"

Mr. Blow changed color slightly, but drew himself up with dignity, saying:

"Excuse me, sir. You have the advantage of me.

I do not remember having had the honor of your acquaintance."

"Well, here's a go!" said the brisk young man. "I have the honor to be J.W. Drummer, of the house of Clothes, Goods and Co., Chicago—at your service; and from this sample I judge you to be Abe Blowman, Esquire, formerly of the house of Smut, Coal and Co., of Randolph St. Perhaps you don't remember the billiards we had together last winter at Snug Hole."

The gentlemen, Mr. Blow's companions, gazed from him to the brisk young man with undisguised astonishment. Mr. Blow said in his haughtiest style:

"Pardon me, sir; you are evidently mistaken in the man. My name is Blow. Rev. Abel Blow, evangelist: I have never met you to my knowledge, nor have I ever been in the city of Chicago. If you will excuse me, sir, I am engaged at present."

"Here's a rum one!" ejaculated the brisk young man, "I'd 'a' sworn on a stack of Bibles as big as a meeting-house that your name was Blowman, and that you were a sewing-machine agent. Pardon my intrusion. Good day!" And he marched briskly away.

Mr. Blow looked after him a moment perplexedly and remarked:

"It is very strange, I have been called by that name three times within as many months. There must be a striking likeness between its owner and myself. A very forward young man that."

"I think," said the gentleman who had sustained the priest's argument, "that I remember having seen in the St. Louis papers, a few weeks ago, a report that a person of that name had absconded from somewhere in Illinois. What is the name, Bloyer, Blottum?"

"Blowman!" answered Mr. Blow shortly. "Ex-

cuse me, gentlemen, it is near my dinner hour."

When Mr. Blow sat down at Mr. Oppenhaus's table, shortly after, it was observed that his beard was entirely gone and that he wore a pair of eyeglasses. During a lull in the conversation, he remarked:

"My eyes have pained me very much to-day. I fear I am injuring my sight by overwork. It grieves me to think it, but I shall be obliged to give up preaching for a time."

A chorus of regrets, remonstrances and expostulations followed this announcement. "I cannot think," said Mr. Blow, "that it is right for me to destroy my health. I have felt quite unwell for several days. I cannot sleep at all, and my nervous system is severely strained." His appetite was evidently unimpaired though, for he ate a hearty dinner, after which he retired to his room and lay down.

In a short time there was a knock at the door, and Mrs. Weekhart came in with anxious inquiries for his health, and careful suggestions of medicines. She was *so* grieved to see him sick, and felt *so* anxious about him, and begged him for her sake to take care of his health. Mr. Blow was glad to think that she cared for him. Her sympathy was very sweet and consoling. He thought he needed no medicine but rest, and perhaps a change of air. He had injured his nervous system dreadfully years ago, by laboring in a great revival beyond his strength. He felt sure that some day he would drop dead in the pulpit. But she need not grieve. He was ready to lay down his life for the Master's service. Mrs. Weekhart burst into tears. "O! darling Abel, don't be sick! Please take care of your health. What can I do for you?"

"Don't be excited, my love, I think I only need rest. If you will leave me, and not let me be dis-

turbed, I think I can sleep now. I shall not be able to leave my bed to-day; so please send word to Mr. Sturmup that I am too ill to preach to-night. You had better not go to church, since I shall not be there. And if you will please have a light supper brought to me before night, a cup of tea, with a few slices of toast, and three or four eggs, hard boiled, and a little fried ham or chicken, I may be able to eat a little. And, Hannah my love, have the horses and carriage ready for us to start by six o'clock in the morning. I'm persuaded that an immediate change of air is the only thing that can save me from a serious illness. We will go to Austin. I understand that is quite a town, and we may succeed better there than here. I'm sorry to lose to-night's work. There will be a large congregation probably." And Mr. Blow sighed deeply. "Now you may go, my love, and I will try to rest."

Mrs. Weekhart hesitated a moment, then stooping down, pressed a fervent kiss on his forehead, and hurried blushing from the room.

There was no small stir in the congregation that night, when Mr. Sturmup arose and with a sorrowful air announced that his dearest and most eloquent brother, the evangelist, had been taken suddenly ill, and was confined to his bed.

In one of the front pews sat the gentleman who had held the morning's argument about confession and by his side the brisk young man, Mr. Drummer of Chicago. When the announcement was heard, they exchanged glances, and Mr. Drummer proposed to the other in a whisper that they should go, which they did, with half the congregation behind them. As they passed the door, Mr. Drummer said:

"Here's a go! He won't come to church because he is afraid I would know him. I thought I recognized him in spite of his good clothes, and now I am sure of it."

"Do not be too sure; you may be mistaken. He says that he has been taken erronously for that Mr. What-do-your-call-him, several times. If you should make a mistake it would be very serious, for this gentleman is most popular and successful, and reputation is everything to a man of his profession."

"Well, I am sure enough to write to those who will know him. There is a warrant out for him, and it won't hurt to have a detective take a look at him. Beside, there is a little reward offered for information."

The gentlemen parted at the next corner, and the sharp-faced young man walked briskly off by himself, muttering, "Here's a go! Abe Blowman before the footlights in the character of your pious preacher. It's too good!"

CHAPTER XIV

WHEREIN THE COURSE OF EVENTS PURSUES THE EVEN TENOR OF ITS WAY, BUT NOT WITHOUT SOME NOTABLE OBSERVATIONS

"How delightful, how mild, how beautiful is everything! The sun shines forth like the great smile of nature. The lowing herds go peacefully forth to crop the green feast freely spread for them in rich abundance by the great All-mother. The birds carol their morning hymn on glad wings. Every tiny insect by the wayside rejoices in peace and plenty. How truly does the poet say:

" 'And every prospect pleases,
But only man is vile.' "

It was Mr. Blow who spoke, in a weak, languid tone, from the corner of the carriage wherein he reclined, propped up by cushions and pillows. His sole auditors were Mrs. Weekhart, who sat beside him, with a look of gentle solicitude, and the colored Jehu, who handled the reins. Waco lay just behind them; its excited meetings, its hospitable dinners, its full collections, its sober ministers, and earnest people, its Free United Reformed Catholic Church Protestant of Simple Believers, its annoying controversies, and unpleasant suspicions, all were things of the past. Before them lay a smooth road, and a lovely summer day, and a great untried future of infinite possibilities.

Mr. Blow was happy—evidently so. His posture, comfortably reclining in soft ease, declared it; his

smoothly shaven face at every curve and angle declared it; his pale blue eyes, beaming joyously through the gold-rimmed glasses across his nose, declared it. Even his sandy hair, blowing in the gentle breeze over the snowy pillow which Miss Oppenhaus had thoughtfully placed for his head, conspired to declare Mr. Blow's perfect happiness.

Mrs. Weekhart was also blissful in the radiation of his happiness. Her eyes were constantly upon his face and reflected faithfully every expression that appeared there.

Ever and anon she bent toward him, saying: "I hope you are not wearied." "Do you feel any better?" "Can I arrange your pillows?" And a hundred other expressions of anxious solicitude betrayed the sensations of her heart. The only thing that troubled her was a feeling of restraint. She could have wished her faithful old Jehu in Halifax so she might have given free rein to her tender sentiments. But Mr. Blow had carefully cautioned her not to disclose their secret in any way—a wish on his part which she was determined to respect. The secret she would keep, though she had to get the assistance of every woman she met, as she had already obtained that of Mrs. and Miss Oppenhaus and several other ladies in Waco.

So the day wore on. Mr. Blow soon discarded his cushions and pillows, to Mrs. Weekhart's great uneasiness, and at noon made a hearty meal off the abundant "snack" which Mrs. Oppenhaus's forethought had provided.

Toward night they arrived at Belton, where resided some friends of Mrs. Weekhart's, who welcomed them warmly, and made them comfortable in their luxurious home. Mr. Gettall had been a friend of Mrs. Weekhart's father in years past. He was a small, elderly man with keen gray eyes, of little ed-

ucation, but great shrewdness, who had amassed a large fortune in Belton. His wife was a woman young enough to be his daughter, tall, slender and graceful, of high education, and a deeply religious disposition. The rest of the family consisted of a daughter, a plain-faced, weak-minded young lady of gushing manners, the fruit of a former marriage, and several younger children.

When Mrs. Weekhart had introduced Mr. Blow, expatiated upon his wonderful abilities and exalted his religious position, she dwelt upon his feeble health and her own anxiety concerning it, and moreover privately confided to Mrs. Gettall the relations that existed between him and herself. The family assigned him at once a lofty place in their regard and veneration, and besieged him with solicitations to remain and rest with them until his health should be fully restored. Among other inducements, they represented that a camp-meeting was in progress not far from town, at which was assembled a great multitude, and that he might do very great good by visiting it.

Mr. Blow had never before in his life been domiciled in so luxurious and elegant a home, and required but little pressing to consent to pass some time amidst these unusual comforts.

He found no reason to regret his resolution. Mr. Gettall was affable even to obsequiousness, Mrs. Gettall was kind and attentive to his comforts and enjoyments, and Miss Gettall devoted herself to his entertainment to a degree that moved the jealousy of Mrs. Weekhart. The days were spent in a round of feasting, driving, entertaining company and being entertained, to Mr. Blow's infinite satisfaction. Not long after their arrival Miss Gettall confided to Mr. Blow that her father, though in her estimation a good and upright man, with as few faults as the generality of mankind, was not a Christian, and she begged him

to use his influence toward his conversion. Mr. Blow promised to do what he could in that direction and watched for an opportunity to speak to Mr. Gettall on the subject of religion. Shortly after, Mr. Gettall invited Mr. Blow to drive out with him and look over a farm which he owned in the neighborhood.

On the road, they passed a negro laborer, and Mr. Gettall remarked:

"A nasty animal, that."

"What?" asked Mr. Blow.

"The nigger," said Mr. Gettall. "Don't you think, sir, that it is wicked to preach the gospel to niggers?"

"Why, no, I cannot say that I do. Why should it be?"

"Why? They are merely beasts, and the filthiest of all beasts. A nigger has no soul. I believe that the only sin for which God punishes men is amalgamation with the black race. Every nation that is at all mixed up with that blood is under a curse and is dying out. A nigger can't be saved, and to preach the gospel to them is, in my opinion, wicked."

"I never heard such opinions advanced before," responded Mr. Blow with an air of astonishment. "I think a negro has a soul, and can be saved as well as a white man."

"No, sir, you are mistaken. The nigger is the curse of the world. He is not human. He has not the prime instincts of a human being. If the Bible were properly translated everybody would hold what I say here, to be the truth. It was a nigger that tempted Eve in the garden of Eden. The Bible says serpent; but in Hebrew the same word means serpent and devil and nigger. The nigger never descended from Adam. He was the father of white men, and the sin for which the flood came was the amalgamation of the whites with the blacks. Noah was a white man, but

he lived among mulattoes, and he and his white children were the only ones that God saved."

"But where did the negroes come from after the flood?"

"O! the flood didn't drown any but mulattoes. It only came over part of the world where the white race had mixed with the aborigines."

"Don't you believe that Adam was the first man and the father of all the human race?"

"Yes, perhaps so. But the nigger is not a man; he's only an animal. It is no more sin to kill a nigger than to kill a dog. They are nastier than dogs."

"I am afraid, Mr. Gettall, that your opinion is merely the prejudice of your Southern blood. You have been used to owning them as slaves, perhaps, and hence feel so toward them—"

"No, I never owned one in my life and never would. I am not a Southern man, I was born in Connecticut. I don't want to be thought a Southern man, for they have associated with niggers so long that there's some nigger in the most of them. They believe he has a soul. They preach to him and try to treat him as a human, and I believe that is the reason that God has cursed this country."

"Do you not associate with the negroes at all?"

"No, sir, I would as lief associate with apes."

"But I saw some in your store this morning.

"O yes, I take their money. White men have a right to use the earth and everything in it, niggers included. Half the niggers in this country owe me money, and I would rather have them owe me than white men for they are not sharp enough to cheat me."

Here Mr. Gettall drew rein in front of a miserable little cabin of logs that stood by the roadside, in front of which an old negro was busily engaged in repairing a dilapidated agricultural implement.

"Hallo! Sam," he said. The old negro looked up,

and doffing his hat approached the buggy with a low bow.

"Good ebenin', Massa Gettall, I hopes you's well and you fam'ly."

"How much cotton have you got picked, Sam?"

"Well, massa, de wooms is mighty bad on ole Sam dis year, an' I'se bin sick a heap. I han't got out more'n two bale. I reckon I kin git two mo' p'r'aps 'fore de season's ober."

"Have you made any corn?"

"Well, massa, you see de fence wus so bad dat de stock got in my corn and eat it pretty much all up. I don't 'blieve da's 'nuff to bread me."

"Look here, Sam, I want you to remember that you owe me three bales of cotton yet on last year, and three more on this—and you have got them to pay. I won't have any more of your nonsense. You bring your cotton and corn right in, every bit of it, and I will take that brown mule for the balance."

"Lor', massa, how kin Sam feed his pickaninnies widout de corn and make a crop widout de mule? Be easy on me, massa, an I'll pay it all, ebery cent."

"I've been too easy with you! You lying black scoundrel! You think you can lie around and do nothing and live off of me. If you don't bring the cotton and corn and the mule too, I'll sue you, and then you will have big costs to pay beside. Do you hear?"

"Yes, massa, I'se gwine to bring 'em. I reckon de Lord 'll take keer o' de pickaninnies an ole Sam, an' I hope he'll be mo' mussiful in de day of jedgment to you dan you is to po' Sam."

The buggy drove on, and old Sam returned to his singing in a doleful way to himself. The only of the song that reached the ears of the occu- of the buggy were—

"Judgment, judgment,
Judgment-day am coming 'round."

"Listen to the old hypocrite," said Mr. Gettall. "Do you think he is human?"

"I fear, Mr. Gettall, that you do not fear God," said the evangelist solemnly.

"No," said Mr. Gettall in a light tone, "I don't know that I do particularly. Why should I?"

"Don't you think that you were rather hard on the old darkey?"

"Not a bit! He owes me the money. You don't think it wrong for a man to claim his own?"

"Well, I suppose not."

"Of course not! This black thief has been in debt to me for the last four years. I have been advancing his supplies and only charging him two and a half per cent a month. And I would have no objection to letting it go on now, except that he is getting too old and infirm. And if he should die I would lose it all. He has no property of any account except one mule."

Mr. Blow changed the subject abruptly, saying:

"Have you ever thought of the subject of personal religion?"

"Yes, I have thought of it, and have come to the conclusion (pardon the expression) that it's all confounded nonsense. I regard religion as composed in equal parts of knavery, hypocrisy and superstition. I am rather blunt, but you asked my opinion, and you have got it."

"How do you expect to get to heaven without religion?"

"I think a man's life has a deal more to do with his getting to heaven than his religion. And I am as good as the average. That is a fine field of cotton over there. I judge that it will turn out over a bale to the acre."

The conversation turned on cotton and remained there until the drive was ended.

At the supper-table that night Mrs. Gettall remarked that Judge Nolaw had come to town.

"Indeed," said Mr. Gettall, "I had not heard it. Court does not open till day-after-to-morrow."

"Who is Judge Nolaw?" asked Mr. Blow.

"He is the new judge just appointed for this district. He has been a very prominent man at the bar, and was member of legislature for two terms. We must entertain him. Wife, can't you give him a reception to-morrow night? and I will go around right after supper and call."

"But, papa," put in Miss Gettall, "we don't know him. What is the use of going to so much trouble? We proposed visiting the camp-meeting to-morrow."

"Well, you can put off your trip. I think the camp-meeting will survive. The judge is somebody, and we must entertain him properly."

"Would he give you a reception, papa," asked one of the smaller children, "if you went to Austin?"

"Be silent, sir! Children should be seen and not heard. Mrs. Gettall, you will get out your invitations in the morning. It must come off before the judge is busy in court."

The trip to the camp-meeting was thus postponed, and the reception took place.

When Mr. Blow, with Mrs. Weekhart (arrayed in some garments borrowed for the occasion from Mrs. Gettall) on his arm, came down stairs, the festivities were well begun. The spacious and richly furnished parlors were a blaze of light, and beautifully decorated with flowers arranged by Mrs. Gettall's tasteful hand; and the assembled guests, under her skillful management, were all at ease and enjoying themselves. In the center of the front parlor stood Judge Nolaw, a tall, fleshy, animal-faced individual, with an elephantine strut and a sour, surly expres-

sion of countenance, and close to his elbow stood the host with his wizened, gray-bearded face expanded into what he considered an amiable smile, obsequiously devouring the great man's commonplaces, laughing at his stale jokes, and assenting blindly to his opinions.

Mr. Blow was presented to the judge by Mrs. Gettall as "the great evangelist."

The judge looked him over deliberately, and pronounced himself glad to see him.

Mr. Blow was pleased with having the honor of his acquaintance.

"Mr. Blow is one of our greatest divines, judge," said Mr. Gettall. "He is staying a few days with me, at my request, on his way to conduct a revival at Austin. And I am proud to have been the means of bringing you together."

"I regret," said the judge, "that I have not had the pleasure of meeting you before, sir. I hope I shall have the honor of seeing you in Austin on my return. Mr. Smith, (to a gentleman standing by) did you see old man Racer's Billy run at the last state fair?"

"No, sir," answered Mr. Smith, "I was not on the track that day."

"That's one of the finest horses in Texas," remarked the judge.

"Yes," said Mr. Gettall. "Did you know I used to own that horse? I bought him from a negro down on the creek here for twenty dollars and sold him to Racer not long afterward for three hundred. He's a fine horse."

"I heard," said Mr. Smith, "that Racer refused a thousand for him at the fair."

Mr. Blow turned away, and was introduced by Mrs. Gettall to the rest of the company.

"I think I'll sit on the porch, gentlemen, and take a smoke. The flowers smell too strong for me in here. I don't see why people will fill their houses full of weeds." This from the judge.

"Yes," said Mr. Gettall, "I agree with you, I have often told my wife so. But she has a foolish idea about flowers. Take a cigar," and Mr. Gettall produced some fine havanas.

"What an elegant gentleman the new judge is," remarked Miss Gettall to a young gentleman, watching that ponderous individual as he disappeared out of the door. "He has such a commanding presence!"

"Do you know," asked one of the guests of another, "whether the evangelist will preach for us Sunday? I should like to hear him, but I must say he does not look like much of a preacher."

"Do you think so?" responded the other, a young lady of uncertain age and very juvenile costume, "I don't agree with you at all. He looks just like my idea of a saint. He has such a mild, wise, tender expression. I don't know whether he will preach or not. They say he is quite unwell. Call Mrs. Gettall and ask her."

Mrs. Weekhart was the topic of conversation, in a group of young ladies in the corner—"Is that lady with Mr. Blow his wife?"

"No, I understand she is his sister-in-law or something. He lost his wife not long ago, and was so cut up by it that he has been sick ever since."

"Poor man," said No. 3, "how ill he looks!"

"But," exclaimed No. 4, "Miss Jane told me that she believes Mr. Blow is engaged to Mrs. Weekhart, and that they will be married."

"I don't believe it!" said No. 2. "I don't see anything about her that he could fall in love with. How shocking to think of an evangelist being in love! Just see what a foolish simper she has. She is not fit to marry him. It can't be true."

Said No. 1: "Isn't that dress she has on for all the world just like Mrs. Gettall's black silk with bugles? I believe it is the very same."

A young gentleman in full dress and a budding mustache approached Mrs. Weekhart. "Madam, we understand that you are a great singer. Would you oblige the company with a specimen of your extraordinary vocal accomplishments? It will give me extreme pleasure to conduct you to the piano." Mrs. Weekhart hesitated. She would rather be excused. She sang nothing but sacred music.

The young gentleman appealed to Mrs. Gettall. "Please, madam, exert your compelling potency to procure us a melodious strain of harmony from this lovely prima-donna. My poor efforts of persuasion are completely inefficient."

"Certainly," said Mrs. Gettall, "I am sure that Mrs. Weekhart will consent to sing for my guests. Do allow Mr. Jackanapes to lead you to the piano."

Mrs. Weekhart consented, and was led to the piano with an immense flourish on the part of the gentleman. She sang "The Life-boat" with an effect that would have been really fine if Mr. Jackanapes, whose sense of musical time and tune was absolutely latent, had not endeavored to sing the tenor.

When the song was finished Mrs. Weekhart glanced round the parlors and perceived that Mr. Blow was missing.

She refused to sing again, though solicited by many to do so, and declaring that she was very warm requested Mr. Jackanapes to lead her out upon the veranda. Mr. Jackanapes at once perceived that she was smitten by his perfections, and offering his arm whispered something about the delight of serving so paradisiacal a beauty and so heavenly a singer with a life-time of servile attentions. When they reached the veranda Mrs. Weekhart discovered Mr. Blow in the act of promenading with Miss Gettall on one arm and a loudly-dressed young widow on the other, which sight so affected her that drawing her hand from Mr.

Jackanapes' arm, and without a word of excuse, to his infinite disgust, she hurried to her room—which no persuasion could induce her to leave for the rest of the evening, and where she sobbed herself to sleep long after the guests were dispersed.

Her absence was almost wholly unnoticed by Mr. Blow, who was enjoying himself immensely.

The entertainment was broken up rather earlier than the host had anticipated by the honorable judge who, after having partaken freely of the elegant refreshments spread by Mrs. Gettall, at once seized his hat, and said: "Well, good night, Gettall, I'm sleepy. I always go to bed early, and parties bore me, anyway."

"Good night, judge," said Mr. Gettall, shaking his hand heartily, "I am sorry to have you leave so soon. I feel very much honored by your presence in my house, and shall be glad to have you regard it as always open to you and yours. Won't you light a cigar before you go? If you will wait a moment I will have a carriage at the door at your disposal."

"Well, I will take a cigar," suiting the action to the word, and taking three or four from the box which Mr. Gettall extended; "But I'll walk to the hotel, my feed settles better after a walk." And the judge put on his hat in the parlor, lit a cigar, and without another word took his departure.

Mr. Gettall soon retired to his room, and several of the older guests went home.

"I hope, Mrs. Gettall," said Mr. Jackanapes, "that the presence of this illustrious divine will not prevent a little terpsichorean amusement. May the light fantastic toe chase some gloomy hours away?"

"I should not like to have any dancing until we find out whether Mr. Blow disapproves of it."

"I will obtain the ministerial sanction," said Mr. Jackanapes, and approaching the sofa where the

evangelist, reclining at ease amidst a bevy of ladies, was recovering slowly from the fatigues of the table, he said:

"The assembled beauty and chivalry of Belton beg the favorable consideration of the grave and reverend evangelist, for their humble petition to be allowed to divert their youthful spirits by an act of homage to Terpsichore."

Mr. Blow looked at him a moment in bewilderment, and then said: "Excuse me, sir, but you observed that—"

"He wanted you to let us dance," interrupted one of the young ladies with a laugh.

"Oh! as to that I have nothing to say. Ask Mrs. Gettall," said Mr. Blow.

"But she won't let us do it," said the young lady, "if you object to dancing."

"Well," he said, "I dislike to express an opinion that may be disagreeable, I do not know that the mere act of dancing is sinful—but it is worldly, and of the flesh. We must draw a line somewhere between things allowable and worldly indulgence. And I believe that the most respectable authorities draw it at dancing and card-playing. I do not dance myself. I should esteem it wrong. But I shall be sorry to have my opinions interfere with your amusements. If the company desires to dance I will retire."

Mr. Blow half rose to a sitting posture, and beamed an inquiring smile upon the ladies round him.

The ladies protested that they would willingly sacrifice the amusement rather than lose his company. So Mr. Blow resumed his recumbent position and launched out into a dissertation upon the nature of Christian self-denial, which lasted until the company dispersed.

CHAPTER XV

WHICH RELATES HOW THE GREAT EVANGELIST ATTENDED CAMP-MEETING; WHAT HE SAW THERE; AND WHAT HE THOUGHT ABOUT IT

The next morning after the reception Mr. Gettall was not in the best possible humor, refused to allow his carriage and horses to go to the camp-meeting on the ground that the carriage was out of order, and at the breakfast-table, in spite of Mr. Blow's presence, indulged in various sneering remarks about camp-meetings, and religion in general, to the no little discomfort of his wife. After he had gone to his business it was arranged that Mrs. and Miss Gettall should go with Mr. Blow and Mrs. Weekhart, in the latter's carriage, returning early in the evening—which arrangement was speedily carried into effect.

The camp-ground was in a "bottom" on the banks of a creek, about five miles from town. Here a large arbor, made of poles and branches, supported by tall, forked stakes, and supplied with benches of the rudest description, formed of logs and rough planks, had been erected for the accommodation of the religious services; and at convenient distances around were booths and tents for the shelter of the worshipers.

The grounds were thronged with people and, but for the presence of so many women and children, might easily have been mistaken for a bivouac of troops. Our visitors arrived in the interim between the earlier and the later services of the morning; yet although no stated service was in progress, some hun-

dred or more persons were assembled in the central arbor, engaged in singing hymns.

There were some six or seven preachers on the ground of almost as many different denominations, to the most of whom Mrs. Gettall and her step-daughter were well known. Some of them came out to receive the visitors, and upon being introduced to Mr. Blow, they welcomed him most warmly. They had heard the fame of his operations; they were proud to meet him; they hoped that he would stay with them, and share in the labors of the blessed work that was in progress. Great good was being done; a large number of conversions had occurred already; and there was a reasonable prospect of many more.

Mr. Blow felt delighted to be with them and would gladly be of service, but his health was precarious, and his engagements pressing, so that he could not promise to stay longer than one day.

A gentleman here came up and tendered the hospitality of his camp to the visitors. It was accepted, and though it was yet early, they were soon seated at a repast, which if not exactly elegant, was certainly good and abundant.

After eating, they repaired to the central arbor, whither all the assembly soon came flocking, and filled it to its utmost capacity.

Mr. Blow was honored with a seat on the bench behind the rustic pulpit, and distinguished by an invitation to make the "long prayer," which duty he discharged to the great and enthusiastically manifested satisfaction of the congregation, who kept up an almost continuous series of responses and ejaculations from the beginning to the end.

The preacher, a gaunt, tall person, with tow-colored hair and a weather-beaten face, took for his text the words from the Prophet Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones: "And behold they were very dry,"

from which he preached an excellent and powerful, though rather incoherent, discourse upon the hopeless condition of souls deprived of the life of God—the delivery of which occupied an hour and three-quarters. The congregation listened attentively and with decorum to the end, and there was little manifestation of the intense excitement to which Mr. Blow was accustomed, and which he expected to see. After the sermon the congregation adjourned to dinner.

As our party was seated around the well-supplied board of their host Mrs. Weekhart remarked:

"There did not seem to be much manifestation of the Spirit at the preaching. When Mr. Blow preaches there is always a powerful moving."

"You see," answered the host, "we don't expect much visible result from the day services. They are intended more for the strengthening of the godly. The night service is the one for sinners. You will see then how they will be stirred."

"I have always found," said Mr. Blow, "that the night is most favorable for producing those religious manifestations that result in most good. My daylight efforts have always been most unsatisfactory. Even on Sunday morning it is almost impossible to create a feeling that brings out converts."

"But," said Mrs. Gettall, "it seems to me that our Savior always preached by daylight; I don't remember having read that he ever preached at night."

"That may be true," answered Mr. Blow; "but since his time methods have been improved. Experience has made us wiser. I have no doubt that had he preached at night he would have accomplished much more than he did. He made very few converts."

An awkward silence followed this speech. No one seemed desirous to answer it, or continue the subject. The silence was at last broken by Miss Gettall, who observed:

"I wonder, Mr. Feeder, how you manage to set so good a table out here in the woods."

"Oh, provisions are plenty, such as they are."

"I am sure everything is very excellent," said Mrs. Weekhart, "but we have had hardly time to get hungry since eating."

"We don't intend," he responded, "to let anybody be hungry here if we can help it."

"How many meals a day do you have in camp?" asked Miss Gettall.

"We have four regular meals, besides coffee in the morning and a warm snack after the late preaching; and we find them few enough."

"Living so in the open air gives us all such appetites, you see," explained Mrs. Feeder, helping herself to a large piece of ham.

"Do you not find eating so often to interfere with the devotional exercises?" asked Mrs. Gettall.

"Well, no," responded Mr. Feeder. "Have a little more turkey, Mr. Blow? Some of the preachers say that they can't preach so well after a hearty meal. That's the reason we have a warm supper after the late service. But others say that that is all imaginary. I think now that a man needs some support to go through such violent exercise. When a man is empty he is weak and thin, and his preaching is likely to be so too. I think our best preachers are the best eaters."

"I entirely agree with you," said Mr. Blow. "To do good work the system must be in good order. I always like to eat about an hour and a half before preaching, and am very hungry immediately afterward."

"It seems to me," ventured Mrs. Gettall, "that the Bible joins praying and fasting together, as though one prayed better when fasting."

"That is a wholly Roman Catholic doctrine," said

Mr. Blow magisterially, "and tends to superstition and fanaticism. It stands upon the false foundation of works. We are not justified by works, but by faith, and men grasp faith better when they are full. Hunger is the father of doubts and idle self-questionings."

"But why does the Bible say 'Fast and pray,' if fasting is not good?" persisted Mrs. Gettall.

"When the Bible speaks of fasting," said Mr. Blow, with an air of condescending explanation, "it must always be understood in a spiritual sense. Fasting there means abstinence from sin, and not abstinence from food. Now we are told that Christ fasted forty days and forty nights. If we understand that during that time he ate nothing, we are plainly wrong, for no man can live so long without food. It must be taken in a spiritual sense."

At this point, the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of one of the ministers, who, being welcomed and seated at the table, said:

"Brother Blow, I was appointed to preach the discourse to-night, but as I find that the people are very anxious to hear you, I shall gladly give way, and let you preach."

"Thank you," said Mr. Blow, "but I am entirely unprepared. I had not anticipated taking any part in the meeting."

"Surely," said Mr. Feeder, "so great a preacher as Mr. Blow is always prepared."

"Of course he is," said Mrs. Weekhart. "He can deliver a beautiful sermon at any time without a moment's preparation."

"I hope, Mr. Blow," pleaded Miss Gettall, "that you will allow us to enjoy your eloquence. We have heard so much of you that we are dying to listen to your preaching. I know that half of Belton will be here to-night on purpose."

"I should be sorry to disappoint anybody," said Mr. Blow, "but my health is so delicate at present that—"

"Now do preach, Mr. Blow," said Mrs. Feeder.

"We shall be very much disappointed if you do not," said Mr. Feeder.

"I hope Mr. Blow won't refuse," said Mrs. Gettall.

"Well," said Mr. Blow, so beset, "I think I might consent to preach if the brethren are willing to have me take up a collection for—for a missionary enterprise that I am interested in—"

The minister looked serious, at this proposal, and said that it would be necessary to consult the brethren about it. It was contrary to the rules of the camp-ground to take up a collection for any purpose other than the necessary expenses, but in Brother Blow's behalf, they might be willing to set this rule aside. The dinner finished, he went off to consult about the matter, and presently returned and reported that, though it pained him to say so, the rule must be enforced. Yet they would be sadly disappointed if Brother Blow declined preaching.

Mr. Blow appeared offended and absolutely declined to say a word. But finally, yielding to the solicitations of Mrs. and especially Miss Gettall, and the blandishments of Mrs. Weekhart, he promised to preach.

At three o'clock, all repaired to the arbor for prayers, singing and exhortation—exercises that lasted some two hours and-a-half.

During this time, Mr. Blow's attention was arrested by a comely young lady who lay near the front of the pulpit on a pile of straw in all the rigidity of death. She was pale as a corpse, even to her lips; her limbs were set and stiff and the only signs of life about her were a scarcely perceptible breath and the faintest possible pulse. Mr. Blow watched her with great curiosity, and after the services asked what it

meant, and why she lay there. One of the by-standers told him that she was in a trance—that she had "gone off" at one of the night services, and had lain so without food or drink for two days and nights; and that they were all anxious for her to come back, for she would probably bring them some news from the other world.

"When will she probably come back?" asked Mr. Blow eagerly.

"Well, we can't tell; sometimes she stays several days, and sometimes only a few hours."

"Why don't you try to arouse her? Give her some restorative?"

"Because it would be wicked to call her soul out of bliss. God has taken her to show her some of the heavenly glories."

Mr. Blow went away with Mr. Feeder and his companions to a supper fully as substantial as the dinner had been, but he was so interested in the young lady in the trance that he could talk of nothing else.

After supper, at early candle-light, all returned to the arbor, where, after rather lengthy preliminary exercises, Mr. Blow preached on "A Visit to Calvary," with tremendous effect. Never, in all his experience, had he seen such excitement. All his previous services were tame in comparison. It required all his vocal power—and he had not a little—to make himself heard by those immediately around him. Scarcely was he seated and wiping the dripping perspiration from his brow, when a burly figure marched up into the pulpit, and laying aside his coat, said: "My brethren, I come pretty nigh not getting here in time; but now I'm come, let me say a few words of exhortation. This young gentleman has preached to us with great power, and every word he's said's true as gospel." And beginning Mr. Blow's sermon again he repeated the whole of it in substance.

Mr. Blow was aghast. The speaker was unmistakable. The immense figure in his shirt-sleeves, the wood-chopping gestures, and above all the clarion voice with its peculiar drawl and melancholy cadence were inimitable. It was—it could be—none other than—Dr. Holiton; but there was no escape, and Mr. Blow was forced to sit still, and hear his sermon repeated, with much less elegance but greater effect than he had given it.

At the conclusion of Dr. Holiton's effort the scene in the arbor beggared description. Some were laughing, some were weeping, some screaming at the top of their voices, some jumping up and down, some rolling on the ground. All was in the wildest uproar.

One old man, a preacher, was marching back and forth before the pulpit with his arm and forefinger extended, singing in a monotonous whine:

"I wish my finger was a gun,
To shoot the devil as he run!"

which words he repeated over and over with added force at each repetition.

Mrs. Feeder, seated on one of the front benches, was reclining on her husband's shoulder and laughing most heartily. There was no intermittent paroxysm to the laugh, but one continuous and loud cachination.

Mr. Blow looked at the promenading and singing minister a moment in disgust, and then his eye fell on Mrs. Feeder. He was annoyed—she had noticed how Dr. Holiton had mocked him, and was amused at it. Stepping down from the pulpit he went to her and remarked in a severe tone:

"Mrs. Feeder, madam, I am astonished at your behavior. I supposed that you were too good a Christian to indulge in this unseemly levity on so solemn

an occasion as this. Restrain your laughter, madam, until a more seasonable time."

The lady made him no answer, but looking full in his face with a vacant expression, but an appearance of intense amusement, quietly continued laughing.

"I see, Mr. Blow," said her husband, "that you are mistaken. This is the work of the Spirit, and is called the Holy Laugh. It is very seldom that my wife is so moved. I recollect once when she was quite young she had the Holy Laugh. But your lovely sermon brought the Spirit to her. I should have shouted myself, I believe, but for my anxiety to protect her."

"Indeed, sir, I beg your pardon," said Mr. Blow, "I did not know that the Spirit manifested itself in this manner—I— "

The remark was broken short by a buxom young lady of some twenty summers, who rushed at Mr. Blow, and throwing her powerful arms around him, said, or rather screamed:

"O! thank God for you, dear Brother Blow! Thank God for you. Oh! Ah! You have brought peace and bliss to my soul. I have felt the warm touch of Divine Love! I am saved! Yes, I am saved! And I must give the kiss of peace to all God's people, and especially to my savior!"

It was no use for Mr. Blow to struggle. She was as strong as a giantess and held his arms pinioned to his side while she covered his face with kisses. In the struggle his eye-glasses were knocked off and broken. Presently she released him and made a similar attack upon the aged gentleman who was fervently praying to have his finger converted into a spiritual firearm.

Just at the right of Mr. Blow at this juncture was a man of middle age undergoing a genuine attack of the experience called shouting. With both hands

he held fast to one of the stakes which supported the arbor, and was jumping upward as high as he could—at each jump shouting, "O, Glory!" "O, Glory!" at the top of his voice.

As Mr. Blow staggered aside from the force with which he was released by the young lady he came into violent contact with this figure, and was precipitated headlong over two persons—a young man and a young woman—who were kneeling upon the ground close by, with their hands clasped in each other's, engaged in vociferous devotion—one singing a doggerel hymn and the other praying. Mr. Blow's weight brought them both to the ground, where all three lay writhing for some moments—the young man, apparently in an ecstasy, continuing his prayer, the young woman groaning with pain, and Mr. Blow struggling ineffectually to regain his feet. Presently Mr. Feeder came to the rescue, and lifted him up, inquiring anxiously whether he were hurt.

Mr. Blow, after carefully feeling his limbs and ribs, pronounced himself all right, and proceeded as carefully as possible to extricate himself from the excited mass of humanity, and join Mrs. Weekhart, who, with Mrs. and Miss Gettall, was standing at the edge of the arbor.

As he came up to them, Mrs. Gettall said, "Did ever you see such a sight as this, Mr. Blow!"

"O isn't it glorious!" exclaimed Mrs. Weekhart. "I never before saw so powerful a manifestation of the Spirit."

"You certainly cannot suppose that the Spirit has aught to do with this uproar," said Mrs. Gettall, with some indignation.

"Certainly it has," rejoined Mrs. Weekhart, with great warmth. "You think so, don't you, Mr. Blow?"

"Well," answered Mr. Blow, cautiously, and feeling his side to be sure that his ribs were whole, "I

should be loath to deny it altogether. There seems to be some little confusion running; but no reasonable man can suppose that people would indulge in actions so apparently ridiculous unless moved to it by some irresistible power. Moreover, we have scriptural examples of just such manifestations as this. The Day of Pentecost, for instance—when the Spirit was first poured out—undoubtedly witnessed a scene very similar to this. See how these speak with other tongues. There is a man (pointing to a person near them who was kneeling on the ground, and swaying backward and forward, and shouting "Hallelujah! Hallelujah!") who, as I am told, has been a notorious sinner. The words of praise that are in his mouth are surely 'another tongue' to him."

"How can you," exclaimed Mrs. Gettall, "how dare you, liken that holy occasion to such an orgy as this?"

"I fear, madam," said Mr. Blow solemnly, "that you have not tried to prepare your heart to receive the blessed influence of this hallowed hour. Let us all kneel down and beg the Lord to let some droppings of his blessings fall on us."

Mr. Blow kneeled, and began to pray, and his example was followed by Mrs. Weekhart and Miss Gettall, but Mrs. Gettall remained standing, and remarked that she thought it was time for them to return home.

Mr. Blow's prayer was presently interrupted by a loud shout, which was re-echoed by a dozen voices in different parts of the arbor: "Hush! hush! Sallie's come back! Sallie's come back!" This announcement was followed by a tolerable degree of quiet throughout the assembly, broken only by a few who were too far gone in their religious excitement to have any consciousness of what was happening around them. Mr. Blow ended his prayer abruptly, and rising hastened toward the pulpit, followed by Mrs. Week-

hart. He found the young lady who had been in the trance, sitting up in the straw, and ejaculating:

"O me! O glory! O heaven! Why couldn't I stay? O me! Give me something to eat! O heaven!" She was surrounded by a group of excited women who were asking in a breath: "What did you see?" "Where have you been?" "Tell us about heaven!" "Did you see my John there?"

"I'll tell you all about it," she said; "only give me something to eat first. I'm nearly starved."

Some food and drink were brought, and while the returned one was ravenously satisfying her appetite, under the direction of one of the ministers, the shouting people who could not be quieted, including Mrs. Feeder and the man who had knocked Mr. Blow down, were removed, and order was restored.

When the young lady had finished her meal, and drank several cups of strong coffee, she was seated upon the pulpit, and the crowd gathered close around her, while she spoke as may be found in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVI

WHICH RELATES THE SURPRISING VISIONS SEEN BY THE YOUNG LADY WHO HAD THE TRANCE

Miss Sallie, being seated upon the platform, and surrounded by the expectant crowd, as stated in the last chapter, spoke as follows:

"I ain't worthy to sit up here in this holy place where you have put me, and the things that my eyes have seen and my ears heard in the month that I've been gone from you, they was worthless to see and hear, and I am weak to tell. But since you all desire to hear them holy things, I can't conceal the revelations of God. At the meeting about a month ago I was praying and shouting and an influence came over me—"

"Why, Sallie, it was only two days ago," interrupted a voice from the crowd.

"I tell you I've been gone a month, and I hoped I was going to stay always," persisted Miss Sallie. "Ain't it so, Mr. Rail?" appealing to one of the ministers who stood by.

"Well," answered he, learnedly, "by earthly measurements your absence has continued but about forty-eight hours. But that may well be a month in the celestial chronology, for the Scripture tells us that a day with the Lord is as a thousand years. In heaven, no doubt time is measured by sensations and not by solar and terrestrial revolutions—"

"Yes," continued Miss Sallie, "that's just what the angel with the clock told me, for I asked him when I

came out how long I'd been there. He said, 'Mystery is incomprehensive, and terrestrial revolutions is not told here. You've been in heaven a month.'"

"Go on with the story," cried an impatient feminine voice.

Miss Sallie continued: "An influence come over me. It seemed as if I was going down, down, down. Then directly I heard a loud voice saying, 'Get from here, and let her alone.' Then I opened my eyes and it was as dark as pitch and so cold; and I saw a black thing that looked something like a snake, and something like a dog, and something like a man, with big yellow wings, and he smelt awful, sneaking off with his tail between his legs, and right by me stood a big white angel with a golden crown made out of stars and diamonds, and a big bowie knife in his hand. And he put his arm around me, and said, 'That devil nearly got you that time, but don't be afraid; I'm sent after you to bring you back. Come, let's go.' Then we seemed to float right off in the dark, but it got lighter and lighter as we went along. We went so easy that I couldn't tell whether we was walking or riding or flying, and I kind of dozed off in a nap, but directly he woke me up and said, 'Look down.' So I looked down, and I saw a wide, wide river, just as black as ink. And all along one bank was a black cloud. And lots of people was going into the cloud—old people and young people and little children. And the angel says, says he, 'That's Jordan's stormy bank, and everybody has to go into that cloud and over that river.' Then I looked to the other side and it was bright and lovely, and some people, not a great many, was climbing out of the river there, and everyone come out stark naked. And some angels there was waiting for them with white clothes all bright and pretty, and they kissed the people and dressed them up fine and carried them up to the top

of a high hill where there was lots of chariots and horses of fire. And the big ones got into chariots and flew off up to heaven, but the little children the angels carried up in their arms. Then the angel says, 'That's Canaan's fair and happy land. You'll have to go through the river of Jordan there some day. But I'm to take you by another road now. Come and let's go over to the hill and take a carriage, for I'm mighty tired, you're so heavy.' Then I saw that he was carrying me, but I didn't feel afraid, and he took me over to the hill. The angels there with the chariots none of them had on golden crowns like the one with me; they were all mighty respectful to him and took off their hats; and he picked out the best-looking chariot, and put me in it. I was afraid to get in at first, the flames looked so hot; but he said they wouldn't hurt me—and they didn't either, for so I found out that they wasn't real flames, but only make-believe for glory. Oh, they were so bright and pretty! He whipped up the horses and as we started I tried to see over the other side of the hill, but there was nothing there—just nothing at all. It was like the blank side of a wall, without any wall. And I asked the angel what was on the other side of that hill, and he said: 'It ain't got any other side; that's the end.' Well, we traveled so fast that we just left a string of fire in the air behind us like a rocket or a shooting-star. And I don't think it was a quarter of an hour before we landed on a big porch that is in front of the door of heaven. Oh! it was such a pretty porch, all made of white and green and red stones, and the pillars was purple stones, and the top looked as if it was all curtained with pink silk, like the tester of a bedstead. The porch was full of angels, all with spears and swords and shields, and every kind of weapons. And I asked the angel what that was for, and he said to keep bad angels and spirits away

from the door. The angel knocked on the door, and after a while it opened and an old man with a long, long, white beard come out, and shut the door, and said something to me, but I could not understand him. 'It's Peter,' says the angel, 'and he wants to know your name;' so I told him my name and he began to look in a big book he had under his arm. Directly he said, 'She looks likely, but I ain't got no record of her; perhaps there's some mistake.' 'No,' says the angel, 'I reckon not. She ain't come to stay yet; she only wants to look around a spell. I've got orders to fetch her.' 'Oh! that's all right then,' says Peter, 'I'll let her in, but she can't stay long;' and he opened the door. Then the angel says to me, 'You can go in now, and ramble round awhile; and when you get tired come back; I'll wait for you. You needn't be in a hurry, for I ain't got much to do just now.'

"So I walked in, and just as I got inside I saw a great crowd of people come running to meet me, and they had on all white clothes, and gold crowns, and gold harps in their hands, and they'd run up close to me and look at me to see if they knowed me, and then walked away playing on their harps. I walked on a little way and was astonished to see that the road wasn't gold at all, but a kind of white stone, and I couldn't see no sun anywheres, or moon, but it was ten times as light as sunshine. Directly one of the people said to me, 'You look mighty curious, coming in here with a speckled calico on. Where's your white robe? You can't get into the New Jerusalem in them clothes.' Says I, 'Ain't this the New Jerusalem?' 'No,' says he, 'this is the country outside; yonder is the New Jerusalem up yonder.' 'Where?' says I. 'Up there,' says he. 'I don't see it,' says I. 'You must have bad eyesight,' says he. 'I don't see anything,' says I, 'but

an awful bright place.' 'Well,' says he, 'that's it. You can't see it well until your eyes get used to it. But you'd better ask the angels there at the gate for a white robe, for you have to have one before you can go into the New Jerusalem.'

"So I went back to the gate where there was a crowd of angels standing, and asked one of them if he could get me a white robe, but he only laughed and never said a word. Then I asked some of the others but they all just laughed.

"By and by one of them that looked like a kind of boss, and had a great big silver clock under his arm, that he kept looking at, says he to me: 'You can't get no white robes here. You didn't come to stay, and that's the reason you didn't get a robe.' 'Well,' says I, 'how can I get into the New Jerusalem?' 'You can't go there at all,' says he, 'and you'd better not try, if you know when you're wise.' Then I turned around and went back to the one I'd been talking to and told him what the angel said. 'Well,' says he, 'never mind; let's take a little walk. So we struck into a path that led down into a kind of hollow by a creek, with big trees on both sides, something like pecan trees. He tried to take hold of my hand to help me down the side of the hollow, but he coudn't, and I couldn't get hold of his; it was like as if there was a plate or something between us. 'Well,' says he, 'It's funny I can't touch you.' 'I think so too,' says I. Well, we went on talking until we come out into a kind of little prairie like, and there was tables all around with nice victuals on them, and angels with aprons on standing to wait on the people that eat. We sat down at one table, but an angel come and said, that I couldn't have anything to eat there because I did not have a white robe on. So we got up and walked on to where a great crowd of people were sitting around on the ground, and he said, 'Let's sit

down a while; there's going to be a concert here directly.' So we sat down and waited—"

"Didn't you see anything of my John?" here interrupted a shrill female voice.

"Yes, I was just going to say, that while we was waiting who should come up but John Lankin. I'd have known him at once, though he is mighty changed; and he says, 'Why, how do you do, Sallie? When did you come here?' 'Just a bit ago,' says I. 'You don't look as if you'd come to stay,' says he. 'No,' says I, 'I'm just on a visit.' Says he, 'How's my wife? I've been looking for her a long time, but I'm afraid she won't never come.' 'Why not?' says I. 'Why,' says he, 'she'll have to learn to do less jawing if she ever gets here; they don't allow that sort of thing in this country.'"

An audible titter pervaded the crowd at this remark, and Mrs. Lankin, turning very red, muttered that she believed that Miss Sallie was just making up an outrageous lie, (an expression of opinion that was rebuked by cries of "Shame!" from everyone that heard it), and slipping out of the crowd departed.

Miss Sallie continued her narrative: "After a while some music struck up. I couldn't see where it came from, but oh, it was lovely. It seemed like a mixture of a waltz and a hymn tune, and while it lasted I couldn't do anything but listen and listen. I don't know how long it played; it seemed to be a year, and then it seemed to be only a minute. While it was playing, somebody came running and said that somebody was coming in the gate, and then all the people got up and run away to see if it was anybody belonging to them, and left me alone, and I went off into a kind of a dream and couldn't hear anything or think of anything but the music—and the next thing I knew I was roused up by an angel who was shaking me by the shoulder. 'Get up,' he says, 'I've

been hunting everywhere for you. You've stayed a week over your time now.'

"I jumped up quick and told him that I'd only been there a few minutes, and didn't want to go yet; but he wouldn't hear to me at all, and just hurried me along to the gate. As I went past the bunch of angels, the one with the big silver clock under his arm hollered at me, and said, 'You ought to be ashamed of yourself! I reckon you thought you'd come to stay, didn't you? You've been dawdling around a week over your time.' 'How long have I been here, I'd like to know,' says I. 'A good month,' says he, 'and if you'd have stayed a day longer you'd have had to stay always.' I didn't have time to say any more to him, the angel pushed me along so, and when I got to the gate Peter looked awful black at me, and says he: 'Hurry up! Hurry up there! You've been in some mischief, I'll be bound. You won't get in here again in a hurry,' and he just pushed me out and slammed the door. I found the angel that brought me there a waiting, but he was awful mad and says he, "Well! you've kept me waiting a nice time, ain't you? I've fooled away so much time here waiting for you that I won't get my work up in a year,' and he just grabbed me and gave a big jump off from the porch, and that's the last thing I know until I woke up here. But are you sure that it was only two days ago that I went off?"

The bystanders assured her that it was even so, but she was loath to believe it, apparently, and descended from her elevated seat with many expressions of incredulity. Finding the revelation ended, the company quickly dispersed, and our friends, with no very formal leave-taking, were soon seated in the carriage and rolling rapidly homeward.

Mr. Blow seemed very much impressed by what he had seen and heard, and after various disconnected

ejaculations, launched off into the following remarks:

"How great is the goodness of God that he vouchsafes to us humble beings such revelations as those we have heard to-night—condescending so to assure our faith, and inspire our hope. I have much clearer ideas of the nature of heaven since listening to the remarkable vision that was granted to your Miss What's-the-name, than ever I had before; and much more correct notions of the condition and employments of the saved. I understand also the meaning of the keys being given to Peter. Of course! He was thus constituted door-keeper of heaven. Having once denied his Savior, he was unworthy of any more exalted station. What a lesson this should teach us of the danger of denying our religion! The book that he had under his arm, I suppose, must have been a catalogue of those who have been truly converted. No, I reckon not! For her name was not on it. It must be rather a catalogue of those who have passed over the River."

"Do you think, Mr. Blow," said Mrs. Gettall, "that she actually was in heaven and really saw the things she related?"

"Of course!" replied Mr. Blow, with much surprise. "Of course! You can't imagine that one under so holy an influence, and amid so solemn surroundings, would tell deliberate falsehoods! A lie would have brought upon her the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira."

"No, I would not accuse Miss Sallie of deliberate falsehood. But I am inclined to think her deluded by an excited imagination."

"You are certainly wrong, madam, and your views, though doubtless you do not intend them so, are disrespectful to the Spirit that worked so wonderful a blessing to this young lady, and all who heard her. There is no reason to doubt the reality of the vision.

Doesn't John say, somewhere in the gospel, 'I was in the Spirit with the Lord's day?' and doesn't Peter or James say, 'I knew a man snatched up to the seventh heavens?'

"Surely with such examples in the Scriptures we have no reason to doubt one who, with every appearance of truth, declares that she has been taken, not to the seventh heaven, but merely inside the door of the first. Consider how true to our conceptions of heaven, and to all that is revealed to us about it, this vision is—the redeemed in white robes, with golden crowns, and harps, and ravishing music—is not that just like heaven? The angels with starry crowns, the chariots of fire to waft us to the regions of bliss—all this is in perfect harmony with what we know of heaven. And how exquisitely natural the thought that those who have gone before are waiting near the gate, and running at every arrival to see whether it be some of their own loved ones whom they may welcome to glory! I certainly believe the vision true. It would be almost infidelity to doubt of it. And I devoutly hope and pray that, before my life is ended, some such glorious experience may be vouchsafed to me."

"I agree with Mr. Blow entirely," said Mrs. Weekhart. "I was inclined to doubt, I confess, at first, because Miss Sallie seemed so unlikely a person, but your reasons have put my mind at rest."

"Unlikely person!" said Mr. Blow, "not at all. God has always chosen to make his greatest revelations and give his most signal blessings by means of the most unlikely persons. John and Peter were fishermen; Paul was only a needle-driver. I don't believe any of the apostles could read or write. Now if Miss Sallie had been a person of ability and culture we might have had ground to fear that her experience was imaginary, but being what she is it is a matter of pure

impossibility that she could have invented all that she told in her vision."

"I never thought of it so," said Miss Gettall. "That seems reasonable."

Mrs. Gettall made no further remarks, and at length they arrived at home to find Mr. Gettall, in considerable impatience, and in more ill-humor and incivility, awaiting them.

CHAPTER XVII

WHICH THE READER MAY MISTAKENLY THINK TO HAVE LITTLE BEARING ON THE STORY

Miss Dolly Williams was sitting in the parlor window, half hidden among the curtains; her head was reclining upon her arm over the window-seat; and her eyes were vacantly watching the twilight shadows, as they fell and deepened over the shrubbery of the garden. She looked pale and thin and listless. The girlish curves of her face had changed into straight lines and sharp angles. Suddenly a face and figure appeared in the dusky light close to her, and a cheery voice said:

"Is my lady building air-castles, or watching for her troubadour? Shall I put a feather in my cap? Shall I sing? What is my lady's fancy?"

Miss Dolly raised herself up, and with an air of constraint replied: "Good evening, Mr. Winters. You came in very quietly. I did not see you until you spoke."

"Yes," he answered, "I did not make much noise, and I did not see you until I spoke, or rather, I spoke as soon as I saw you. But you do not answer my question. Pray let me share in my lady's fancies. I will put them into a sonnet."

"If I you mean me by your lady," she answered rather shortly, "she has no fancies."

Mr. Winters was silent a few moments, and then in a more serious tone said: "I can't understand you, Miss Dolly. You are an enigma to me."

"Indeed?" she responded drily, "I understand myself perfectly. And I don't see the necessity of being understood by anyone else."

Mr. Winters paused again, and then with a resumption of his bantering, jocose air, said:

"I am sorry that the rude interruption of my lady's pleasant meditations has brought her displeasure upon her devoted servant. He is consoled, though, by the thought that he suffers in the discharge of duty. He came, as it behooved, to learn whether my lady attends the ecclesiastical soiree, otherwise church sociable, at the residence of the worthy Brother Jones, this evening."

"Will you talk English, and be serious!" exclaimed Miss Dolly in an impatient tone. "It's bad enough to be bored without being ridiculed," she added saucily.

Mr. Winters' countenance fell. "Will you attend the sociable?" he asked.

"No—well, that is —I don't want to; but I suppose I must. If I don't go, papa will be vexed, and Dr. Stolid will call, and stay two hours. Oh dear! What a weariness it all is!"

A long silence ensued. Miss Dolly gazed at the stars, appearing one by one in the sky. Mr. Winters gazed at her face with intense interest. Night drew her dusky curtains closer around both. Presently Mr. Winters took a step nearer, and pulled a long breath as if about to speak. Miss Dolly drew back with a startled air, and looked at him.

"Miss Dolly," he said in a strained, subdued tone, "forgive me, if I offend you. You say I bore you. If I do, I will go away, but—but – I want first to—don't be angry with me—I mean to say—" he stopped a moment as though frightened at himself, and then burst out vehemently: "Dolly! darling! I love you. I worship you—I adore you. Dolly, I have

loved you since the first moment I caught sight of you in the streets of Buffalo. Can you love me?"

She said not a word but buried her face in the curtain and held out a hand as in mute appeal for him to forbear. He seized it, and pressed it to his lips.

"Oh! Dolly, please don't hush me! Please don't drive me away! I love you more than my life. I know—that is, I fear—you do not love me; but perhaps you will; perhaps you can, after a time. Tell me that you do not love another! Tell me that I may hope, even though it be *years*. I know, and you know, that our parents hope that we may be married. Your father told me so to-day—I do not urge that as a reason why you should consent to my suit, but only that you will suspend my condemnation. Do not reject me just now. Oh, if you would let me prove how crazily, how deeply, how wholly I love you!" Again he seized her hand passionately. She drew it away suddenly.

"Ahem," broke in a feminine voice in the darkness —"I beg your pardon. I hope I am not intruding. Is Miss Dolly in? I wanted to see her a moment. But it's of no consequence—I can call to-morrow." It was Mrs. Grundy's voice, beyond question, and her figure loomed up indistinctly through the darkness.

Mr. Winters turned, and with quiet self-possession said:

"Ah, Mrs. Grundy! Good evening, madam. I think Miss Dolly is in the house, walk in, and I will call her."

"I think I had better call again, Mr. Winters. I don't wish to intrude," said Mrs. Grundy, but without making a movement to go.

"Intrude?" queried Mr. Winters surprisedly. "Why, not at all! I can finish some other time. I was merely rehearsing my part in a little charade that we have in contemplation for the benefit of the church, 'For-

get me not;' did you ever hear it? It is in two acts, '*For*,' and, '*Getmenot.*' I personate the unfortunate lover who doesn't get her. Walk in, madam."

"Ah! yes," said Mrs. Grundy, walking into the parlor which Miss Dolly had hurriedly lighted, "I understand. A capital idea, Mr. Winters, capital! And Miss Dolly, I suppose, personates the character who is not gotten, perhaps. Starlight rehearsals! Open air scenery! how nice! I am afraid I did interrupt, though— But I have some news that I know Miss Dolly will be glad to hear. Do you know, my dear, that they have heard from Mr. Blowman? It's a strange story. He is passing himself off as a preacher way out in Texas under the name of the Rev. Abel Blow, and is making quite a sensation, they say, becoming very popular—and he is married there. And Mr. Smith, your father's cartman, you know, (Mrs. Grundy watched the poor little changing face narrowly) is traveling with him as singer. I did not hear whether he was married or not—that is, my informant did not know whether it was Mr. Blowman or Mr. Smith that was married. Isn't it strange? To think of those two vagabonds doing so scoundrelly a thing, and with success, too! Poor little Mrs. Blowman! I hear she is quite sick. I hope the news will revive her. I have not been able to see her since I heard it. But perhaps she knows all about it already. I did not think Mr. Blowman would be guilty of such conduct. He was a nice person—but that Smith! One could not have looked for anything else from a mere adventurer like him. I understand that the police are on their track."

"Who are these people, Mrs. Grundy?" asked Mr. Winters.

"Oh, Miss Dolly knows all about them," she answered. "She will tell you, I dare say. I must hurry home now to get ready for the sociable. I hope

you will excuse me for interrupting your rehearsal. Good night!"

Mr. Winters showed Mrs. Grundy out, and returned to the parlor to find Miss Dolly gone. Nor did he see her again that night. The sociable had to go on without her. She did not come down to breakfast, the next morning, but sent word that she was suffering with a headache and too indisposed to rise.

Mr. Williams went to his business; Miss Dolly's headaches were rather frequent of late, and caused him little uneasiness. Mr. Winters idled around the house and grounds, anxiously awaiting Miss Dolly's appearance. Two or three hours having elapsed, he concluded that it was useless to wait longer, and strolled uneasily down the street. He had not gone very far when, looking back, he saw Miss Dolly come out of the gate and walk off rapidly in the opposite direction. He followed, at first rapidly with the intention of joining her; then, reflecting that she might prefer to be alone, he kept in her wake more slowly. And he finally was about to give up the pursuit altogether as rude and improper, when he saw her enter a house. He knew the place; he had been there with her, it was Mrs. Blowman's. His curiosity was aroused to know what connection Miss Dolly had with the Blowmans and he determined to wait till she came out. He had long to wait.

The door was opened to Miss Dolly's tap by a tidy woman who made a gesture of silence. "Can I see Mrs. Blowman?" whispered Miss Dolly, in obedience to the signal.

"Yes," answered the other in the same tone. "I guess it can't do no harm. She's bad off now, poor thing! She was doing well this morning, the doctor said, but Mrs. Grundy came in, and told her that her husband was heard from, and that he was married to another woman, and was a preacher and that he was

going to be put in jail, and like enough hung. And, poor Mrs. Blowman, it like to killed her. She cried and screamed like mad, and it was all two of us could do to keep her in bed, and she's been out of her head ever since." Saying this the woman opened a door and ushered Miss Dolly into Mrs. Blowman's chamber.

Two plain but kind-faced women sat beside the wretched bed, on which lay the wasted form of the unhappy woman. She turned continually from side to side on the bed, scanned eagerly with her hollow eyes each face in turn, and gazed expectantly at the doors and windows, while keeping up an unbroken flow of incoherent sentences.

"Did you say he was coming? I knew he would not stay long. And now we are rich. Yes, Abelard dear, I hear you! You always said that we would have an elegant home some day, and be able to live in ease. I am coming. But oh, I'm so tired! Do tell Mrs. Brown that I cannot finish her dress in time for Sunday. There is too much work on that basque. Abelard! Abelard! Mr. Blowman! You must pay Mr. Williams that bill or he will sell out everything in the house. Please don't take my sewing machine—I cannot make a living till he comes home without that, and he will come home in a day or two. Oh! (her eyes fell on Miss Dolly, and she stretched out her hand, with a smile of recognition, and drew her close to her bedside) Oh! how glad I am! I waited so long for you, dear love, but I knew you had not forgotten me. I knew you would come back to your faithful wife. Don't you know you used to call me your Lucy of Light and Love?"

With a satisfied smile on her wan face, a look of light and love indeed, the exhausted woman lay back on her pillow, and closed her eyes, still clinging with both hands to that of Miss Dolly. After a time she

seemed to sleep, and Miss Dolly endeavored gently to withdraw her hand: but at her slightest movement Mrs. Blowman opened her eyes with a look of agonized entreaty. "O don't, don't! Abe darling, don't leave me again! I have not much further to go. Please go with me, I am so lonely—so lonely without you. You have been gone *so* long. Please stay." Miss Dolly put both her hands into the burning grasp of the sick woman, and sitting on the side of the bed assured her that she would not go.

Satisfied with this Mrs. Blowman again closed her eyes and lay quiet.

"She thinks your're Blowman," whispered one of the women to Miss Dolly. Miss Dolly nodded assent, and sat still, patiently watching the haggard face before her.

An hour passed. One after another the women slipped out to look after their own households, telling Miss Dolly that they would presently return. Once or twice Miss Dolly tried to remove her hands, but at their least movement the hot fingers closed more tightly upon them. Nearly another hour was past when Mrs. Blowman opened her eyes with a look of apparent intelligence and gazed straight into Miss Dolly's face.

"Mrs. Blowman," said Miss Dolly, "do you know me?"

Tears began to trickle down the pallid cheeks. "O Abelard, how can you speak to me so cruelly after all this! You used to call me your Lucy of Light and Love, and now to call me 'Mrs. Blowman!'" She sobbed piteously. "But at least you are here, at least you will take care of the children when I go. I am going—I know it."

"But, my dear Mrs. Blowman," said Miss Dolly, "I am not Mr. Blowman. I am Dolly Williams. I came to ask you if you know where Mr. Blowman is."

As Miss Dolly spoke, the grasp of Mrs. Blowman's hand loosened, and her face assumed an expression of wild terror.

"What?" she screamed. "You not Abelard! Abelard not here! Oh! is he gone? What will become of me? What will become of my poor children? Oh, God!" With an agonizing spasm the poor woman clasped her hands across her heart and fell back motionless upon the bed. Miss Dolly screamed, and the women who came running in found her fainting upon the floor, and Mrs. Blowman lying dead, with a small stream of blood trickling from her mouth.

Mr. Winters was walking uneasily up and down some distance from the house, wearied with the long delay of Miss Dolly, and wondering whether she had slipped out unobserved by him, when he saw her coming out. He joined her immediately with an expression of surprise at meeting her, as though it were purely accidental. She returned no answer to his polite chat, and they walked homeward in silence. He was about to leave her at the door, when she said peremptorily, "Come into the parlor. I want to talk to you." Mr. Winter's face brightened instantly.

"Certainly," he said; "nothing could delight me more than to hear my lady talk. I feared from the experience of my walk that she was not exactly in a talking humor."

They sat down in the parlor. Mr. Winters looked expectantly at her. She seemed constrained and ill at ease. He said in a serious tone:

"I hope that this conference is not to deal me my death-blow. Dolly, darling, I cannot endure it. Pray let me hope. Please—" She interrupted him:

"Mr. Winters, listen to me. You say that you love me. I believe that you do; therefore you will care for my happiness. You are a gentleman, a man of honor,

therefore I can trust you. But I don't know how to tell you what must be told. I cannot help it; you must assist me. Promise me that you will not betray my confidence." She looked him straight in the face.

"I promise," he said.

"On your honor as a gentleman?"

"I promise."

"Promise that you will help me," still looking steadily into his eyes.

"I promise."

"Promise by the love that you profess for me."

"I promise."

"Sit nearer to me."

He drew his chair close beside her and took her hand. She drew her hand away and moving a little from him covered her face.

"Mr. Winters, I do not love you. I respect you; I admire you; but I do not love you, and I cannot; for I love another—" Mr. Winters started to his feet. "Sit down," she said, "I am not done yet. The man I love is Mr. Smith, the one who is in Texas with Mr. Blowman. My father drove him away because he is poor. But he is good and noble, and he loves me. And I am going to Texas to find him. You must go with me. If we find him, and he loves me still, and will marry me, I shall ever hold you as my best friend, and love you for your kindness. If we do not find him, or if he is changed, I will marry you. Perhaps I may learn to love you then; at least you will deserve my hand if you are willing to take it without my heart. Will you help me?" Mr. Winters arose and paced the room from from end to end with his arms folded across his breast and his teeth set tightly. Miss Dolly regarded him furtively. Presently he stopped before her, and said:

"You surely think me something more than human."

"No," she answered. "But I think that you love

me, and I know that if you love me truly, as you say, you will do anything that will make me happy."

Mr. Winters frowned, and resumed his walk. Miss Dolly watched him wonderingly. She tried to guess what was passing in his mind. She began to fear that she had misjudged him. He had always been to her a light-hearted, chivalrous gallant, whose first thought was to serve a lady, his last thought himself. She had supposed that he would enter heartily into her plan the instant it was broached—glad in any way to please her. At last, after at least half an hour, he sat down on the sofa opposite her with a settled, firm look on his face that she had never seen there before. Said he:

"Miss Dolly, I do not think your plan a wise one. Would it not be better to write to Mr. Smith and have him come to you?"

"No, I don't know his address."

"But we can find it easily."

"No, he would not come. He is too honorable to come against my father's will, and father never would consent. I must go to him."

"But, think, if we do as you say, everybody would say at once that you had eloped with me."

"I don't care what anybody says. Go I will! If you will go with me I shall be glad. But whether you go or not, I am going, and going to-night."

"Let me speak to your father first about your relations with Mr. Smith."

"No, you shall not. You have promised on your honor to keep my secret, and on your love to help me. Will you keep your promise or not?"

Mr. Winters resumed his walk without replying; after a while he paused before her, and extending his hand, said, "I will keep my promise."

She took his hand, and kissed it.

Mr. Williams came home to dinner rather earlier

than usual that day, and sent for his daughter to meet him in the parlor. He met her with an annoyed look upon his face, and said abruptly: "What does all this mean, my daughter?

"All what, papa?" asked she, with an air of alarm.

"Horace's going. He came into the office this afternoon and said that he should have to leave by the first train; and he is gone. I could get no reason from him at all, and he looked very blue and downcast. I hope you have not disregarded my wishes and rejected his suit. I told him yesterday that I should be proud to have him for a son-in-law. He spoke to you about it, did he not?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you told him—"

"That I could not give a decided answer yet."

"I regret very much that you did not accept him at once; but I cannot think such an answer sufficient to discourage him entirely. You did not mention, I hope, your other unfortunate affair, nor express any aversion to his attention?"

Miss Dolly blushed and hesitated, "I told him that I respected and admired him very much," she said evasively. Mr. Williams looked at her attentively. "Well," he said in a milder tone, "I don't know that you could have said any more, perhaps. I think I see how the wind blows. But, my dear, don't be too modest, some young men are easily discouraged. But," he added after a moment, "I didn't think Horace could have been bluffed so easily. We will make it all right this time. Speak plainer the next."

So they went in to dinner. The next morning when Mr. Williams came down to breakfast Miss Dolly did not make her appearance. He sent to her room to call her, and the servant reported that she was not in her room nor in the house. Mr. Williams was vexed; he did not like to have any break in the

routine of his life, and sat down to his breakfast muttering something about its being very unusual and absurd for his daughter to go out before breakfast. When he came home to dinner he was surprised to learn that Miss Dolly had been absent all day, and sent the servants around to her most intimate friends to inquire for her. She was not to be found. As he was perplexedly wondering what to make of this extraordinary state of affairs, in walked Mrs. Grundy. "Excuse me, Mr. Williams. So Miss Dolly's gone? Run away with Mr. Winters—How do I know? Why, Mr. Perkins, my nephew, who is employed on the railroad, saw it all. They went off on the 1:30 train last night—came down in a carriage and without any baggage. I thought something of the kind was brewing when I was here night before last. By the merest accident I overheard a part of the conversation, and I thought then that perhaps I ought to speak to you about it, but then it was none of my business. I can't see for the life of me why you should object to the young man. He seems a likely person and, I hear, is very well off—indeed, I think she might have done worse. But then you know best, I suppose. I am afraid you can't help yourself now. Dear, dear! This is a strange world! To think of Dolly's running away. I feel for you, I assure you I do. But I think it is partly your own fault; you might have known that two young people could not be together as they have been these weeks past, and something not come of it. I told Mary Jane, Mr. Perkins' wife, only a day or two ago, that I was sure it would be so, and I am not often mistaken. I suppose you will telegraph to stop them. 'Come back, all is forgiven'—that's what I would say; but perhaps you know better than I what should be done."

Mrs. Grundy had her say, and left Mr. Williams no wiser than when she came.

When she was gone, he sat down to consider the matter. Very extraordinary it was, he thought, that Mr. Winters should elope with his daughter. He could see no reason in it. But then it was not improbable. Young folks had no reason. No doubt they wanted a little romance to begin life with. These novels that young people are so addicted to reading nowadays have a very baneful influence upon their minds. He might be thankful that it was no worse. Horace could have no evil intentions with regard to his daughter. He was a man of honor, of a good family, and might be trusted. On the whole it would be better to let them alone. It was rather mortifying not to have Dolly married in some style, but that could not be mended now. They would return in a day or two as man and wife to receive his blessing. He would wait. So he waited, though not without misgivings; and as the days passed, and they did not return, his misgivings turned into downright anxiety.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHICH FOLLOWS FAITHFULLY THE COURSE OF TIME AND CIRCUMSTANCES

If the reader have a good memory, he (or she—probably she) will recall the fact that at last accounts Mr. Blow was enjoying the hospitality of Mr. Gettall. Up to the evening of the camp-meeting, he had found his entertainment delightful. But at the breakfast-table on the morning following, he experienced a manifest but unnamable change. Mr. Gettall was attentive to his duties as host—unexceptionably so—but his very attentions had an air of rudeness—of condescension. Mrs. Gettall was if possible more polite than usual, but as distant and cold in her perfect elegance as a snow-covered mountain-peak. Miss Gettall was yet in her room and the children were silent and constrained. Before the meal was finished Mr. Gettall excused himself on the plea of business and left the house. And immediately after they rose from the table Mrs. Gettall disappeared, and Mr. Blow was left tete-a-tete with Mrs. Weekhart. He sat looking uncomfortably out of the front window, and she looking at him.

"Abel, dear," she remarked at length, "you look worn out with your work last night. Do you feel well?"

"Well enough!" he answered shortly.

"What is the matter?" asked she with a start.

"That is just what I should like to know. Old Gettall seems to be in a bad humor this morning, and

the madam don't look very pleasant. Been having a family difference, I guess. I think we have been here long enough. You go and pack up your things and I will go and have the carriage brought around."

"But we have not given them any notice that we intended to leave," remonstrated Mrs. Weekhart.

"That makes no difference. Go and tell Mrs. Gettall now, and we can drive by the store and tell Gettall good-bye."

Mr. Blow's programme was soon carried into execution. Mrs. Gettall expressed surprise at the suddenness of their departure, but interposed no objection, and merely expressed a polite hope of seeing them on their return. Miss Gettall remained invisible, and Mr. Gettall said an abrupt adieu. They were soon riding along alone over the road to Austin. The way was long and tedious, the principal events of the journey being tender attentions on the part of Mrs. Weekhart, solicitous for Mr. Blow's comfort, and anxious to win some affectionate caress from him. Mr. Blow was not a man to be proof against female blandishments. Already he loved the charming widow, and as they rode easily along, frequently hand in hand and with his arm encircling her waist, he felt each hour that he was falling deeper and deeper into her power. The evening of the second day brought the journey to an end at a hotel in Austin. The next morning, dressed with elaborate care, Mr. Blow sallied forth to make arrangements for a series of meetings. He was bold and self-confident. His first care was to procure the addresses of the various ministers of the city, with the intention of calling upon them severally and enlisting their co-operation in his plans. But he had gotten scarcely a block from the hotel when a bright thought struck him. He returned, and having obtained from the proprietor permission to use a parlor for a ministerial meeting, he sat down and wrote a note as follows:

"The Reverend Abel Blow, A. B., the widely known and eminently successful evangelist, having arrived in this city, presents his compliments to the Rev.——, and cordially invites him to attend a meeting of conference this evening at half-past seven o'clock at the parlors of the —— Hotel, with himself and the other Protestant ministers of the city, to consider what steps must be taken for the spread of the light of the gospel throughout the dominions of Satan in Austin."

A copy of this note was soon dispatched to each of the ministers whose addresses he could learn, and Mr. Blow sat complacently down to await results. "Of course," he said confidently to Mrs. Weekhart, "some of the ministers will call at once."

"Of course they will," she assented.

He went on: "By this means, you see, I get them all pledged to the success of the meeting. If any of them disapprove of what may be done after the thing is begun, they can't say anything, you know. Their mouths are stopped."

"I see," she said approvingly.

"And then," continued he, "I have a great advantage before the people in rising above all denominational differences—I take a catholic—that is, liberal —ground. The Methodists can't oppose it because it is a Baptist meeting, nor the Baptists because it is Presbyterian. I invite them all to meet on the broad ground of a common Christianity, and unite in a common cause against a common enemy. By that means I get rid of all oppositions and jealousies, and open the hearts of all; and," he added in a lower tone, "the pockets of all."

"How smart you are!" said she approvingly.

"I try to be as wise as a snake, as well as innocent as a dove," he said self-consciously.

"And you succeed, I am sure," she responded.

Mr. Blow, not thinking of anything further to say,

relapsed into the morning paper, and a state of expectancy. Having read the paper through, advertisements and all, he looked at his watch, and then began walking up and down the room. Ten o'clock came and no callers. Eleven passed, and twelve; still nobody came in. Mr. Blow and Mrs. Weekhart went to dinner. Still none of the ministers appeared. Mr. Blow fidgeted about uneasily until three. He could stand it no longer. He ordered out the carriage and with his companion drove about the city. At five they returned to the hotel; and Mr. Blow inquired anxiously at the office whether anybody had called to see him. "Nobody, sir," was the answer.

Seven o'clock came and still nobody. Mr. Blow, with a feeling of injured innocence, sat alone in the parlor. Suddenly a knock at the door made Mr. Blow, in his strained expectancy, almost start from his chair, and the Rev. Mr. Bill was announced.

The Rev. Mr. Bill was a shock-headed, tangle-bearded, stoop-shouldered man, in well-worn costume. He advanced hesitatingly toward Mr. Blow. "Is this Brother Blow, the evangelist?"

Mr. Blow's self-possession returned instantly. He met Mr. Bill in the middle of the room, shook him warmly by the hand, assured him of the delight that his acquaintance gave him, and seated him on a sofa, taking a position at his right.

"You are a resident of this city, Mr. Bill?"

"Well, yes, I've lived here a good long while now —going on nine years."

"What denomination are you pastor of, sir?"

"Well, I'm a good old Methodist."

"I suppose you have charge of the Methodist congregation here?"

"Well, no. Not exactly. Brother Brown, he's the regular preacher. But I'm a local preacher. I can't ride a circuit very well on account of my—my health

sometimes. So my wife she keeps a boarding-house, and I preach once in a while, when there's a call for it."

"Ah! Will Brother Brown be out to-night?"

"I can't say exactly, for I ain't seen him, but I reckon not, for he has to go to prayer-meeting to-night."

Mr. Blow, without further ado, entered into an exposition of his plans, and recounted his previous triumphs. Half-past seven came, with no fresh arrivals. The clock struck eight and Mr. Blow began to lose heart. Would *nobody* come? He watched the door anxiously, and continued his lecture to Bro. Bill. At last, at half-past eight, he remarked, "I fear nobody else cares enough for the salvation of souls to attend our conference. This apathy on the part of the professed leaders of religion argues a fearful moral condition in this community. I must resort to some other means to reach their consciences. Good night, Brother Bill. We may well go to our closets and pray for an outpouring upon the preachers as well as the people."

Bro. Bill departed, and Mr. Blow, in disappointment and righteous indignation, sought the privacy of his room to elaborate a plan for the morrow's proceedings.

CHAPTER XIX

WHEREIN THE HARDNESS OF THE UNCONVERTED HEART IS CLEARLY DEPICTED

"What was done at the meeting last night?" asked Mrs. Weekhart when she and Mr. Blow met at the breakfast table.

"Very little, answered he deliberately, "in fact, nothing satisfactory. For some reason the attendance was very small;" and with a sigh he added, "I fear that religion is at a very low ebb in this community, when the pastors take so little interest in the salvation of the lost."

"I suppose," she queried, "that you will have a meeting, of course?"

"Of course!" said he decidedly.

"When does it begin?"

"I can't say exactly, but I am going out this morning to make the arrangements, and hope to be able to begin to-morrow. I must see Mr. Brown, the Methodist pastor, as soon as possible." Half an hour later Mr. Blow rang the bell of Mr. Brown's front door. He was shown into an elegantly furnished parlor, and sent up his card with the message that he wished to see Mr. Brown on very important business. It was nearly half an hour before Mr. Brown made his appearance. He was a well-dressed, middle-aged man, in side-whiskers and spectacles. With a very distant air he looked from the card in his hand to his visitor, saying, "You are Mr. Blow, I believe. To what do I owe the honor of your visit?"

"Yes, sir," answered Mr. Blow, advancing and offering his hand, "I am Mr. Blow, sir, the Reverend Able Blow, A.B., the evangelist, sir, so widely known through Texas and other parts as—a—as a converter of souls."

Mr. Brown, not noticing the extended hand, made a slight bow and said: "Ah, indeed. Is there anything I can do for you, sir?"

Mr. Blow was disconcerted. "I intend, sir," he replied, "to hold a series of revival meetings in your city, and I thought I would ask your co-operation, and the use of your church."

"I am very sorry, Mr. Blow, very sorry indeed," rejoined the other in very quiet and very positive tones, "that I can do nothing to further your laudable plan. I am about to leave town for a few weeks' holiday, and the church will be closed for repairs. If there is nothing further, sir, I will wish you good-morning. My time is very much occupied."

Mr. Blow, without replying even so much as to say good-morning, put on his hat and left the house. He was furious, and walked away from the door denouncing Mr. Brown, and the Methodists in general, in strong terms but *sotto voce*. After walking some time to allow his feelings to calm down, he repaired to the house of the Presbyterian minister on a similar errand. Here he met a more cordial reception, but failed to procure a promise of co-operation or the use of a church for his meetings. Full of righteous indignation he went next to the Baptist minister's. This gentleman was not in; but his wife assured Mr. Blow that his time was too much occupied to allow him to assist at the meetings, and that she felt sure that the church was not to be had.

Mr. Blow returned to his hotel very angry, and greatly disappointed. He took Mrs. Weekhart into his confidence, detailed the state of affairs, and desired her advice.

"Well," she answered, "I think it is a shame for them to treat you so. I don't know what we had better do; but I reckon perhaps we had best go home and get married. You need some rest. Don't you think so?"

"No!" said the evangelist emphatically, "I don't propose to give it up so; I will hold my meetings and I'll make this town too hot to hold Brother Brown and the rest of them. I'll show them who they are trifling with."

"But where will you hold the meetings?" said Mrs. Weekhart.

"I don't know. If I can't get a church, I'll rent a hall. Yes! Yes! that's the best plan; then I'll be independent of them all."

Some further conversation ensued, Mrs. Weekhart endeavoring to dissuade Mr. Blow from his attempt to carry on his work despite the tacit opposition of the ministers of the place. But he was determined, and presently went out to rent a suitable place. He was rather staggered at finding that the cheapest place that he could find, at all fit for the purpose, was held at $20 a night, payable in advance. He endeavored to persuade the proprietors to reduce the rent in consideration of the character of his meetings, but they said that they were minded rather to charge more—that they disliked to have the hall used for religious purposes. So he at last closed the bargain and paid the rent for one night. The next morning a flaming advertisement, which cost also a round sum, appeared in the papers:

"Great revival meeting to-night at Shouting Hall!

"The Reverend Abel Blow, A. B., the great Evangelist and popular preacher, will preside. Who is on the Lord's side?

"Down with the powers of darkness! Seats free, grand enthusiasm. Come one, come all.

"Here is your only hope of salvation! Third and last call! Mind the time: 7:30 p. m. sharp."

This notice was read by Mr. Blow and Mrs. Weekhart with great satisfaction. And it was also read by a great many others.

"We will see what will come of that," said Mr. Blow approvingly, after re-reading it aloud for the third time to his co-laborer.

"Don't you reckon that some of the ministers are sorry that they did not ask you to hold the meeting in their churches?" asked she.

"You bet they are. They'll learn a lesson, *I* think." And Mr. Blow put on an expression of sad severity. "I don't believe they'll interfere with the Lord's work again in a hurry."

As the appointed hour approached, this devoted evangelist and his companion set out for the place of meeting, both expressing great confidence in its success, and both feeling many misgivings about it. As they came near, they saw several small groups of men standing around the door. This sight caused Mr. Blow to feel great encouragement.

"We shall have a large attendance to-night," he said cheerfully. "Already the hall is full, though it is quite early, and here are some standing outside." As he passed in he bid the bystanders "Good evening," receiving only a rude stare for a reply. Entering the hall, he found to his disappointment that so far from being full, it held not over a score of people, mostly boys and young men. The Rev. Mr. Bill was present, seated in the front row of benches. Mr. Blow and Mrs. Weekhart went up and took seats upon the platform.

Presently Mr. Bill stepped upon the platform and volunteered any assistance that lay in his power, at the same time shaking hands violently with both the evangelist and his assistant. Mr. Blow, with some asperity of manner, declined the offer, saying that he was accustomed to take full charge of his meetings.

"I didn't mean no offense," said Mr. Bill, "I humbly beg your parding," and he retired to his seat.

Mr. Blow waited, and a few more people came in by twos and threes. After a time Mr. Blow, casting about for the means of beginning the services, discovered that the room contained no Bible. He himself was not fortunate enough to own one. In perplexity he turned to Mrs. Weekhart, and asked her if she had so much as a Testament. She had not. He went down to Mr. Bill and put the question to him. Mr. Bill had no Bible with him, but would gladly step out and fetch one, which he accordingly did, and upon his return took a seat upon the platform. The appointed hour was already some minutes past. Our trio occupied the platform at the upper end of the hall. At the lower end some forty or more people sat in various attitudes of indifference or expectation.

Mr. Blow consulted his watch, and looked at the congregation.

"I reckon it's time to begin?" said Mr. Bill interrogatively.

"Brother Bill," said Mr. Blow, in a loud and solemn tone, "will you open the meeting with a brief prayer?"

Brother Bill arose, and extending his hands toward the congregation, said:

"Let us pray for the blessing of God upon this meeting and especially upon this great evangelist who is about to break to our souls the bread of life, and particularly for this sweet sister who will presently

entertain us with her fine songs, and generally for all saints and all sinners, and for a outpouring of the Spirit upon us. And, brethren, if some of you ain't converted at this meeting it won't be God's fault, nor ours. Let us pray."

A prayer followed, which included all the objects specified, and as many more as came into Brother Bill's mind. He prayed fervently. He prayed long. He prayed until, in desperation, Mr. Blow suggested in an undertone, "That'll do, Brother Bill," when he concluded abruptly and sat down in confusion.

Mr. Blow arose and announced in a stentorian voice: "The next exercise will be a hymn by Sister Weekhart, in which all the congregation are requested to join. Come forward, brethren, to front seats, and lift up your voices to God."

Sister Weekhart sang, "I am so Glad," in her very best style, but with no effect on the congregation. They declined to come forward, or join them in singing, or even to stand, but coolly kept their seats. After the hymn, Mr. Blow read a chapter from the Bible procured by the kind offices of Brother Bill, and offered a prayer, in which he pathetically described the dreadful wickedness of the sinners of Austin, the sad coldness of the professing Christians, and the great blessings which were to follow his meetings. During the progress of this exercise, some of the younger of the auditors began to groan distressfully, a performance which elicited a burst of uncontrollable laughter from one of the others. Another hymn followed, very sweetly sung by Mrs. Weekhart.

This concluded, Mr. Blow arose and announced his text:

"If he will not turn, he will whet his sword."

"Turn or burn" was the subject, and as the familiar words flowed from his lips, and the listeners began to manifest some attentive interest, Mr. Blow waxed bold

and confident. He would succeed yet. But, alas, in the midst of the sermon his eyes fell upon a young man in the back seat who was making some very insulting and derisive gestures, to the great amusement of those who sat near him.

Mr. Blow hesitated a moment, undecided whether to stop and reprimand the offender or not. The pause was fatal. His mind was distracted from the words. In a moment his memory was at fault, and the sermon vanished For several minutes he stood trying to recall the lost argument. He stammered on a few sentences, and finally sat down, requesting Mrs. Weekhart to sing. His discomfiture did not escape the observation of the auditors, one of whom remarked audibly: "That little feller's forgot his piece"—a witticism that occasioned considerable merriment. After the hymn Mr. Blow requested somebody to pass the hat while the next hymn was sung. An awkward pause ensued; nobody volunteered to pass the hat. "Brother Bill," said Mr. Blow, "will *you* please pass the hat?"

Bro. Bill picked up Mr. Blow's hat and circulated it through the congregation, while Mrs. Weekhart sang "Nothing either great or small," alias "Jesus paid it all." Certainly the congregation thought so, for when the hat returned to Mr. Blow it contained just forty-five cents. He took it and looked into it. It was too much—or rather, perhaps, too little. His heart was touched; his indignation was aroused; and he launched off upon the most eloquent speech of his whole life. He began by sketching his own great self-sacrifice, and the great pains and expense he had been at to come to Austin. He estimated the amount of his traveling outlays, hotel bills, hall hire, and advertising. He detailed his futile attempts to interest the ministers in his meeting, and described the interviews that he had had with some of them—all in

the most vivid colors; and concluded by denouncing Austin, its ministers, churches and people in the most unmeasured terms—shaking the dust from his feet, and bewailing the sad fate of all, in the hereafter.

"Yes," he said, "and *you*. You who came here to hear the blessed gospel of salvation set forth with more eloquence than you ever heard in your lives, or ever will hear again—you, with those thrilling strains ringing in your ears—can give *forty-five cents* to help on the message of salvation—forty-five cents—forty-five *cents!* I tell you you are the devil's own children. Your souls are not so big as a cent—not near so big as an old-fashioned copper! Aye, and when you are roasting in hell, the devils will sing for your lullaby, forty-five cents!"

Bursts of ringing applause interrupted this touching oration, and at its conclusion one of the audience jumped upon a bench and cried: "Bully for the evangelist! Three groans for the parsons!" The groans were given with a will. Three groans for Austin; three groans for the people; three groans for Brother Bill; three groans for the revival meeting, and finally three times three groans for the forty-five cents, were given, with hearty good will, amid uproarious bursts of laughter.

Amidst the groans Mr. Blow and Mrs. Weekhart managed to make their escape, and find their way to the hotel. Mr. Blow walked up and down the parlor for some time in silence, Mrs. Weekhart not daring to interrupt his meditations. Finally she plucked up courage, and said:

"Don't you think it would have been better if you had taken my advice? Indeed, it is not too late now. You can discontinue your work for a time, we will be married and go home." Mr. Blow did not reply. After a while she said, "What is the matter, dearest

—I mean, Mr. Blow—are you angry with me? Have I offended you?"

"No, my love," he returned, "but my heart is heavy within me considering the hard-heartedness of the unregenerate souls. Oh, how I long to save them—but I fear they are beyond help. My efforts for their good are a failure—a complete failure. I have"—a knock at the door interrupted these remarks, and Brother Bill came in.

"I don't want to bother you, Brother Blow," he said; "but I kinder thought I'd like to know whether you'll have a meeting to-morrow night."

"No!" answered Mr. Blow decisively; "No. I have no such intention."

"Well, I thought you'd better not. The fact is that you've got odds to work agi'n' here. We had a evangelist what come along here last summer, and he was an unlikely feller, and got on a big drunk, and after that at a meeting of the ministers it were decided not to encourage any more such. Nor no evangelists at all. After the evangelist were here nobody seemed to want to go to church, and the membership fell off amazing. Instead of the churches being fuller they was emptier, and he had so many collections that whenever the plate was passed in church the young fellers would groan like; and down on the street corners they'd say, 'Let's take up a collection,' and pass around a hat for fun. I think perhaps if you hadn't took up a collection to-night there'd a been no trouble, and you'd a got a pretty good crowd to-morrow night, for you preach a pretty fair sermon."

"Mr. Bill," said Mr. Blow sharply, "will you be kind enough to leave us?"

"Certainly I will," said the other, "certainly. But I just thought I'd tell you plain how matters was, and I don't know but what the boys is right. I reckon

all you evangelists is pretty much of a piece. Good-night." And Mr. Bill, having relieved his mind, promptly took his departure.

"What an outrageous scoundrel that is," said Mrs. Weekhart, as he went out. "The *idea* of comparing you to that drunken hypocrite who has been imposing on them here! I felt like giving him a piece of my mind." And she looked as though her mind's pieces were particularly disagreeable.

"Never mind, my dear sister," said Mr. B., looking the personification of injured innocence. "It is the fate of the good and pure-minded to be slandered and traduced. One of the crosses and trials of purity is the hypocrisy of unworthy imitators. We had better turn our thoughts to the future. If we meet no better success elsewhere than in Austin I fear we shall soon be reduced to want."

"No fear of that, darling," answered Mrs. Weekhart consolingly, "I have enough for us both, and I think it would be better for the present to give up preaching and have our nuptials celebrated."

Mr. Blow took her hand caressingly, and seemed about to consent to her proposal; but after some minutes thought he exclaimed, "No, it is impossible for us to be married until I have arranged some little details of business that will take me North a few days."

"What business is it?" queried Mrs. Weekhart.

"No matter; let us talk about something else."

"Well, can't you take me North with you? I never have been North, and I am very anxious to go."

"Do you know any of the towns around here?" asked Mr. B. ignoring the subject.

"Not very well," answered Mrs. Weekhart pouting-ly. "There's Lockport not far from here, and Gonzales, San Marcos, and Bastrop.

"I think, then, that we will go to Lockport to-

morrow, if it is not too far. Perhaps the Lord may be pleased to send us a blessing there. I thought of going to San Antonio, and Galveston and Houston. But from what I find here, I suppose perhaps that we will succeed better in some of the smaller places. Good night."

CHAPTER XX

WHICH ADVANCES RAPIDLY TOWARD A CRISIS IN THIS VERITABLE HISTORY

The journey to Lockport occupied the larger share of the next day. The weather, like most of the summer weather of Texas, was bright and warm—rather too warm for perfect comfort. The road lay through some of the loveliest of Texas scenery, and everything conspired to make our adventurers happy. But they were not happy. Mr. Blow was moody and disappointed. He could think of nothing but the unhappy failure of his venture in Austin, and the more he thought about it, the more vexed and angry he grew. He lamented the wickedness and hard-heartedness of the place, and the horrible fate which, he was sure, awaited it in the future world. He bewailed the great expense he had been at in hall-hire and advertising. He heaped maledictions upon Bro. Brown, Bro. Bill, and all the other ministers of the city, and finally he blamed Mrs. Weekhart for his going to Austin at all. She, poor soul, would have been well content if he had never seen the place, and felt heartily grieved for his disappointment; and now that the blame was saddled upon her, she bore it with meekness, and used every endeavor to console her companion. Her panacea for every trouble was that they should be married at once and retire from the trials and vexations of public life to her estate, and this course of action she urged upon him every half-hour. The immediate celebration of their nuptials seemed to be the only thought of her mind—the one

desire of her heart. Poor thing! She loved her saintly hero with every power of her heart. He seemed to her the very embodiment of the good, the true and the beautiful. She worshiped him blindly. To be near him was bliss and joy. Mr. Blow, on the other hand, felt annoyed by her constant attentions. Frequently when her hand sought his, he drew it away. She had been won too easily to be prized very highly, and the very lavishness of her affection disgusted him. He never had loved her in any real sense, though he had loved her as truly as he was capable of loving. And since he had felt that she was all his own, after a brief enjoyment of his triumph, he began to repent seriously of having achieved it. He thought of his family, he thought of her terrible brother, and rode along in moody silence, only half hearing her now troublesome protestations of affection, and revolving in his mind some plan to safely be rid of her.

"I tell you, my dear," he answered to her fiftieth proposal of immediate marriage, "I tell you, my dear, that it is impossible. I must go North and attend to some little matters concerning my property before I can possibly contract matrimony—and I feel that any such step might result in the loss of thousands of souls, as it would necessarily interrupt my labors on their behalf."

"Could we not be married first, and then go North together?" she asked.

"No," he replied after a pause, "the fact is that the matters concerning the orphans can best be settled in a state of celibacy—"

"What orphans? Your children? Oh, Abel, love, you didn't tell me that you had orphan children. How I should love to see the dear little things. Do they look like you? Are they girls or boys? How many are there? Poor things! How can you leave

them without a mother's or a father's care We ought to be married right away so that I could take care of them. How old are they?"

"No," said Mr. Blow rather pettishly, "you don't understand me. There ain't any orphans. At least, not my children. But there is an estate. Do you see? An *estate.* And it is to be divided. Do you comprehend? Divided amongst orphans—that is, my great-grandfather's heirs, and there are a great many minor heirs, you know—that is, young orphans; and the will expressly forbids the marriage of—ah—of all the adult male heirs. Now I have told you all about it, and you can perceive, I suppose, why I appear rather reluctant to have our relations known—that is, to be publicly married."

"Well, we might be privately married, and not have it known until after the estate was divided," suggested Mrs. Weekhart.

"Deceit is falsehood," said Mr. Blow virtuously. "A lie in act is worse than a lie in word," and he turned to Mrs. Weekhart with a look of rebuke—"I never expected to hear you—you, Mrs. Weekhart—advocate a breach of one of the commandments—a deliberate breach. One may sin from impulse, but to sin deliberately and of calm purpose I never could."

Mrs. Weekhart's countenance fell, and for a while she said nothing. At last she asked: "How long would it take you to go North and attend to the business about the estate, and the orphans?"

"I don't know," he replied, idly contemplating the distant scenery, "some time."

"Well, about how long, two weeks?"

"Oh, longer than that."

"A month?"

"Yes, perhaps three or four. It takes a long time to attend to such business as mine."

"But we must be married before that." Mrs. Weekhart spoke decidedly.

Mr. Blow looked at her surprisedly; "What?" he said.

"I say that we *must* be married before that. I won't be trifled with. I have waited too long already. You needn't care for the will. I've got plenty, and if you don't act right, at once, I'll tell my brother." Mrs. Weekhart spoke quickly, with a trembling voice, ending with a flood of tears. The colored driver hummed a tune in the most absent manner, wiping his eyes stealthily with his shirt sleeve. Mr. Blow sat in silent confusion. He made no motion to check the tears of his companion, but folded his arms and gazed moodily at the distance.

Presently he said abruptly to the driver, "Sam, how far is it to Lockport?"

"Dunno, sah; ten mile, I reckon."

"Stop, and let me walk awhile, I am tired of sitting cramped up here." Accordingly Mr. Blow got out and walked ahead of the carriage at a rapid gait, and as he walked he reflected; first he thought of this, and then of that, and then of the other. He formed one plan and soon changed it for another, and afterward altered it again—and what the substance of his meditations was must remain unknown till the end of time, unless he chooses to tell; for all that can be said about it up to the present time is that after nearly an hour's violent and quite unwonted exercise on foot he stopped and got into the carriage, with an expression on his face very different from that it wore when he got out. He smiled and kissed Mrs. Weekhart, who had regained her composure, and took her hand caressingly in his, saying:

"Hannah, you are right, I have been thinking it all over, and I am persuaded that you are right. We must be married at once. I think perhaps that

such a step may be conducive to greater usefulness in the proper sphere of evangelistic effort, the saving of the lost. Certainly it will add to the strength of our relations and increase our—ah—social strength and prestige—as it were. I can go North and settle up everything there in a very little while, and as soon as I come back we will be married at once. That will give you about time to get ready, I suppose, for I won't have anything clandestine about it. It must be an affair befitting our—ah—our rank in life, you know. Don't you think that a good plan?"

Mrs. Weekhart looked somewhat pleasanter, but, with a still doubtful face, asked:

"How long would you be gone?"

"A month, perhaps. I think I could fix up everything, and get out the proper papers in that time. I certainly can if court is in session, but it won't take longer than five weeks anyway. You could tell me where to meet you on my return. Either here at Lockport, or at Waxahatchie, or Galveston, or anywhere. There is only one difficulty that I can see, and that is—ah—don't you think it the best plan?"

Mrs. Weekhart's face was radiant and free from every cloud. She leaned confidingly against him.

"Darling Abel," she murmured, "you are so good. Yes, I agree with your plan, I have perfect confidence in your judgment. I'd like to go North with you, but if you think best to go alone, it is all right with me. I'll wait for you here at Lockport until you come back."

"Yes, that would be best," said Mr. Blow approvingly, while pressing her soft hand in his. "There is only one little difficulty, so far as I can see."

"What is that?" asked Mrs. Weekhart anxiously.

"Oh! nothing of consequence, a trifling thing, but rather embarrassing just now—a matter of resources."

"What is it?" she asked.

"Well, it's a ridiculous little thing; but the fact is that I haven't got enough of the coin of this world to meet the necessary expenses of my journey. You know that I am far from wealthy—that is, until this estate is settled up. And my expenses have been very great throughout this tour, very." Mr. Blow neglected to mention the items of his expenditure, but it was not necessary. His companion seemed relieved, and said:

"Oh, is that all? I've got plenty. Just tell me how much you think you need and I can give it to you. I reckon I can get a draft cashed in Lockport."

Mr. Blow breathed a long sigh.

"It is sad that one whose life is devoted to God, should be obliged to be harassed about such worldly matters. Few people realize as I do the danger of money—the root of all evil. Do you think that you could lend me as much as five hundred dollars?"

"Abel darling, don't talk so, or I will think that you don't love me. Lend you? Why, it's all yours. Do you think five hundred will be enough?"

Mr. Blow went through a muttered calculation and said: "Well, I don't know, perhaps I had better take a thousand. I might be disappointed about the estate, you know, not knowing the condition of the orphans, and then one must allow for lawyers' bills and contingencies. But I'm afraid you couldn't spare a thousand, my precious darling?"

"Oh, yes I can. Are you sure that will be enough?"

By the time our travelers reached Lockport it was agreed that Mr. Blow should take twelve hundred dollars, and proceed with all possible dispatch to arrange his business in the North, while Mrs. Weekhart awaited his return, and made preparations for their nuptials, at Lockport.

Quite early the next day, all the preliminaries hav-

ing been arranged, Mr. Blow bade his engaging companion an affecting—and perhaps a rather affected—farewell, and took the stage for the nearest railway station. Mrs. Weekhart urged him to allow her to accompany him thus far on his journey, but he insisted that it were better not. She begged him to drive over in her carriage, but he resolutely declined. Finally she said adieu with many tears, protesting that she should be miserable until his return. He, too, assured her that he would be very unhappy—in fact, quite disconsolate; but that he would make all possible speed, and probably be able to return in three weeks. She might expect him at the earliest possible moment, and he would keep her advised of every movement by telegraph. And so they parted, and Mrs. Weekhart retired to her room in the hotel to weep, while Mr. Blow settled himself with a self-satisfied air in the corner of the stage, and hummed a hymn-tune, and thought of the future. "I don't know," he said musingly, half aloud, "but that I had better give up Texas, and try my luck somewhere else."

"Sir?" said his traveling companion, an elderly lady, who was sitting in the opposite corner, and to whom he had not yet paid the slightest attention.

"Excuse me, ma'am, I was merely soliloquizing."

"I beg pardon, sir, I thought you spoke to me."

"Certainly, ma'am, certainly."

After a long quiet the lady said: "Beg pardon, sir, are you a minister?"

"No, ma'am—well, that is to say—not exactly. I am merely an humble evangelist, after the example of the apostles, going around seeking whom I may—ah—convert. I hope, ma'am, that you have experienced religion."

"Yes, sir," returned the lady with an engaging smile, "I have had several experiences. Ah, it is a very sweet thing. Are you Mr. Bigvois?"

"No, ma'am. Blow is my name. The Rev. Abel Blow, A. B., evangelist, of whom you have doubtless heard."

"Oh! I thought you were holding meetings in Austin. Seems to me I heard something about it there. I wanted to go myself, but I hadn't time."

"No, ma'am. Well, the fact is, that I did begin a meeting in Austin the other day, but I could not continue. It grieved me to leave for there seemed likely to be a considerable interest aroused, and probably many souls might have been saved; but an emergency came in the way, and I could not remain. In fact, I heard of the death of my mother,"—Mr. Blow drew out his handkerchief—"and I had to go to her."

"That's very sad!" said the old lady, with a deep sigh; "I wish you could go down to Gonzales to hold a meeting. We do need something of the kind very much. The condition of the place is awful—awful. I was talking about you the other day to Mr. Blather, one of our principal men in religious matters, and he said that he thought we ought to secure your services for a meeting. We heard of your success at Waco, and hoped that you might come our way."

Mr. Blow was silent for a while, and the old lady went on:

"Don't you think that you could give us a few days this summer? So much good might come of it."

"Well," said Mr. Blow, "I don't know, I really don't know. Do you suppose any arrangement could be made to—ah— to defray the expenses?"

"Oh, yes, certainly. Mr. Blather will attend to that. When do you think you could come?"

"I can't say, ma'am. In fact, I don't know that I can come at all. My mother's funeral, you know, must be attended to, and my health is somewhat impaired. I am thinking about making a little trip to Europe this fall."

"Well, now, if you could spare us a week or two, soon—it would do so much good. Mr. Blather said that he felt sure we could raise five hundred dollars for you if you would come down, just for a week, and how much good you might do!" The lady spoke very persuasively. Mr. Blow was silent. "Don't you think you might be able to come?" she added.

"Where is Gonzales?" he asked.

"Just down here a few miles. We'll be there to-night, if you don't stop at Harwood. Perhaps you are going there to take the train? Oh, I do wish that you could go right on with me now."

"I shall have to go now, if I go at all. Such an opportunity is not to be neglected either. I don't know—I think probably my brothers can attend to the funeral without me, but it pains me to think of being absent. However, the Good Book says, 'Let the dead bury their dead.' Do you think that I would be detained longer than a week?"

"I reckon not, of course we wouldn't expect you to stay longer than you felt that you could. You might do a good deal. Gonzales is an excellent place for meetings."

"You don't suppose that there would be any trouble about—ah—the five hundred dollars?"

"Oh, no, not at all. Mr. Blather will see to that."

"I just merely mentioned it, you know, not that I consider it of any importance, but I am poor in this world's goods, and—ah—my expenses have been very heavy of late; and I had the misfortune to be robbed not long since. One must consider these things, you know. Not that I care for money, but 'the laborer is worthy of his hire.' I think I had better go right on with you. I dare not neglect an opportunity of preaching the gospel, and winning souls for a heavenly crown. I never let anything—not even the dearest relations of earth interfere with my efforts in behalf of the lost and the perishing."

The lady expressed great joy at Mr. Blow's determination, and praised his high principles; and so they rode along in edifying conversation.

Mr. Blow narrated the history of his efforts for the evangelization of Texas—at least so much of it as he thought would be for the edification of his auditor, and with such embellishments as would add to its interest and effectiveness; and the lady heard all, and praised all, and congratulated herself and her city that they were about to have such a blessing as a meeting conducted by Mr. Blow must necessarily be. She expressed her firm conviction that in one week of such services as he knew how to hold, every sinner in the town and neighborhood would be hopefully converted to the Lord. And so the day passed, and the sun hastened down into the west, and the brief southern twilight faded, and the moon shone out in unrivaled beauty, and the stage stopped at the elderly lady's door, and the travelers went in to delight the whole family with the news of the precious spiritual feast that was in preparation—And poor Mrs. Weekhart sat in the window of the hotel in Lockport, her eyes all red with weeping, and her heart thrilling with sympathy to the song of a mocking-bird, who, from a tree hard by, in plaintive strains bewailed the absence of his mate.

"Poor bird," she said, "he is all alone, and sad, and perhaps his mate is flown away never to return; and perhaps—" And she wept afresh, and the mocking-bird sang louder and more sadly, until at last he broke off his song with a harsh cry, and flew away, leaving her to weep alone.

CHAPTER XXI

Miss Dolly Williams and her escort arrived in Texas without any adventure worth mentioning. They proceeded to the city of Galveston, and having secured quarters in one of the principal hotels, took steps to inquire the whereabouts of Mr. Blow; but for a long time the quest was unsuccessful. It must be remarked that though he appeared very much interested, and seemed to Miss Dolly to make every possible effort, Mr. Winter's conduct, when out of her sight, seemed to display a strange indifference as to the object of their quest. He read the "Galveston News" every morning, and one would naturally think might have seen there something about Mr. Blow (for what in Texas escapes its sharp observation?) but he never offered the paper to Miss Dolly, and spent the most of his spare time in a billiard-hall.

It may be explained that Mr. Winters played billiards merely for exercise, and seemed to need a great deal of it.

Moreover, all his time seemed to be spare except the hour or two in the evening during which he escorted Miss Dolly to the beach. He insisted that she should bathe daily, saying that the waters of the gulf would do her health good. So two weeks and more passed. "It seems very strange to me, Mr. Winters," said Miss Dolly one day, as they were driving along the beach, watching the long waves as they splashed lazily upon the shore, "it seems very strange

to me that we can hear nothing about Mr. Blowman, if he is preaching in Texas."

"Yes, indeed," he answered dryly, "if he *is* preaching in Texas it is strange."

"Why do you say that?" she rejoined quickly,—"Do you doubt it?"

"Doubt it? What reason is there to believe it?"

"Why, I heard so!"

"Yes, I have *heard* a great many things in the course of my life. And not a few of them were, to say the least, incorrectly stated. What reason is there for supposing that Mr. Blowman is in Texas? Mrs. Grundy's statement? Of course anything that Mrs. Grundy says must be so. But then possibly she meant to say California or Maine or New Mexico. Who knows? Old women often get things mixed. And as for his preaching, it is a good deal more likely that he is peddling patent medicines. And supposing him found. Ten chances to one if Mr. Smith is with him. Now, candidly, Dolly—I should say—Miss Williams, do you suppose that I would have consented to have come on this chase if there had been in my opinion the remotest prospect of success? Hardly. Do you think I would help you to Mr. Smith? You, whom I love better than my life? No; not I. I am hardly heroic enough for all that. Come, Miss Dolly, let us be reasonable. It is of no sort of use for us to look further. Mr. Smith does not care for you, even if you found him, and the search is hopeless. You cannot return home now unmarried. Say the word, and we will be one before the sun sets. Darling, *I* love you. Yes, desperately—more than life. I adore you, I worship you. See those cold waters? I would plunge into them in a moment for you. Oh! my life, I must have you, or I shall go mad! Yes, and you must have me! Do you think that Mr. Smith, supposing you could find him, would take you, after you

had been alone with me so long? No, not if he is a man. There is no alternative. We *must* be married now. Oh, love, do not refuse me. You cannot. You shall not."

It was the first word of love that Mr. Winters had spoken since they had left Aurora. Miss Dolly sat silent with folded hands watching the sea. Mr. Winters presently put his hand upon hers and said beseechingly:

"Don't be angry. Please don't be angry, love. It is only my absorbing love that makes me speak so!"

Miss Dolly quietly put his hand away, and said icily: "We will drive back to the hotel, if you please, Mr. Winters."

Back to the hotel they drove, without another word. And Mr. Winters saw no more of Miss Dolly that night. She, poor thing, spent the night till the day broke over the gulf, sitting by her open window.

"Yes," she said to herself, "it is true what he says. I can never go home again unmarried. And I will never marry him. If I do not find Mr. Smith I will—yes, I *will* drown myself. It were better to die than to live away from him. But I will find him if he is in the world. And I know that he will have me! I know that he loves me!"

Miss Dolly was not destined to be always disappointed. A few days after the events just narrated, she went into the parlor of the hotel to try to while away the heavy time. She was tired of reading, tired of strumming the piano, tired of everything, and she sat at the window watching the lazy street, the lazy wagons passing loaded with bales of white cotton enveloped in dirty brown bagging, and the lazy people creeping along on the shady side of the street; and she wondered whether they all were as calm as they seemed, and had no care but keeping as cool as possible, or whether under their placid exterior there

were blazing fires of love or hate; deep wells of sorrow; aching, longing hearts. While thus occupied—or unoccupied—her attention was attracted by a remark made in a group of elderly ladies who were engaged in conversation near her.

"Well, they ought to be married if they ain't. That's all I've got to say."

"Who's that?" queried another, who had been engaged in examining a chromo on the wall. "Who ought to be married?"

"Why, didn't you hear what Mrs. Smith was saying?" returned the speaker. "She says that that Evangelist Blow what's holding meetings up the country is a-traveling around with a widder—them two all alone together, a-preaching and a-singing here and there, and ain't never been married; and I say they ought to. That's my opinion. It's shameful to disgrace the gospel!"

"I say they ar'n't a-disgracing the gospel," spoke up Mrs. Smith; "I think it's a shame that two people can't do good together without having evil remarks shot at them. Mr. Blow is a good man; I never heard no such sermons as his. I never felt so good in all my life as when I heard him preach in Waco. If you could just hear him preach once you wouldn't think he ought to marry that woman. She ain't much for a man like him. I don't think preachers ought to be married, no how. They ain't half so interesting—certainly not evangelists—they have to be away from home so much. Just imagine such a saint as Mr. Blow a-tending a baby, or a-making a fire, or a-washing dishes. No! He oughtn't to marry at all, I say—not her, nor nobody!"

Presently, when the conversation flagged, Miss Dolly sidled up to Mrs. Smith. "Do you know the Reverend Mr. Blow?" she asked.

"Well, no, miss, I can't say as I knows him exactly,

but I heard him preach, and he's a powerful preacher—about the best I ever did hear, and I've seen some preaching in my time. Do you know him?"

"No, ma'am, but I have heard of him, I think. Do you know whether he came from Illinois?"

"He came from somewhere—he ain't been long in Texas—but I don't know exactly where. But he's a mighty fine preacher."

"Do you know whether there is a gentleman traveling with him named Smith?"

"I never heard that any gentleman was traveling with him. He had a woman who was singing at the meetings, of the name of Mrs. Weekhart; but I didn't hear tell of no gentleman. Some folks think that it don't look well for him to be traveling around with a widder, and them not married; but I wouldn't never say nothing about that, for I think it's the worst thing in the world to say anything agi'n' anybody's character, specially a preacher of the gospel."

"Do you know where Mr. Blow is now?" asked Miss Dolly.

"Yes, I see in the paper, this morning, that he was holding a great revival at Gonzales, and lots of people getting religion. But that ain't nothing strange with such a preacher as him. He always brings out the mourners. Oh, he's a powerful preacher."

A few minutes later found Miss Dolly in the clerk's office inquiring the way to Gonzales. Besides this information, she also obtained a copy of the morning's paper where, in a letter from Gonzales, she found a description of Mr. Blow's powerful preaching and numerous other items of interest.

When Mr. Winters came in to dinner from his recreation in the billiard-hall, he found a summons awaiting him to attend Miss Dolly in the parlor. He promptly did so. Miss Dolly abruptly announced her discovery of Mr. Blow's whereabouts, and her de-

termination to proceed thither without delay. Mr. Winters urged upon her every possible objection against her doing so. He doubted whether there were such a person in existence as the evangelist mentioned. He was certain that it was not Mr. Blowman. It could not be doubted that if it were Mr. Blowman, Mr. Smith was not with him; the journey was long, tedious and dangerous; and finally he concluded with another violent declaration of his own passion, pleading with her to give up the unwomanly search for one who did not care for her, and to accept the love of one to whom she was dearer than life. Miss Dolly remained firm. She reminded him of his promise to assist her, and upbraided him with unfaithfulness in carrying it out. She begged him not to desert her, though declaring that go to Gonzales she would if she had to go alone, and finally she promised that if she failed to find Mr. Smith with Mr. Blow or to hear some definite news of him, she would look no further but yield to Mr. Winters' entreaties, and marry him. These terms Mr. Winters considered safe. He had seen occasional notices of Mr. Blow in the papers ever since they had arrived in Galveston, and had never found any allusion to Mr. Smith as being in his company. From this he inferred that Mr. Smith had no connection at all with Mr. Blow, and that their simultaneous disappearance from Aurora was merely accidental. Weighing these considerations he concluded that his prospects of success with his suit for Miss Dolly's hand would not be imperiled by a trip to Gonzales. Even if this evangelist were the Blowman whom they sought, he would undoubtedly deny all knowledge of Mr. Smith, of Illinois, and of himself. Miss Dolly had had no personal acquaintance with him. She could not identify him at all. So with a tolerably light heart, though an appearance of great reluctance, Mr. Winters consented to the plan

that Miss Dolly proposed, stipulating again that if Mr. Smith was not found at Gonzales, nor any clear trace of him discovered there, Miss Dolly should become his wife with no more delay; and both proceeded to make the necessary preparations for their journey.

This is a short chapter, but an appropriate heading for the next having suggested itself, it will be necessary to begin it right away.

CHAPTER XXII

'The best laid plans of mice and men
Gang aft agley;
And leave us naught but grief and pain
For promised joy."

[This sentiment is supposed to be due to Robbie Burns; but he was a notorious rogue, and no doubt borrowed it from Solomon.]

It was a dark, dank, dismal morning that saw Mr. Winters and Miss Dolly disembark from the San Antonio Express at Harwood, the nearest railroad station to the town of Gonzales. "All aboard," yelled the conductor. "Ding-dong, Ding-dong," responded the locomotive; and our friends looked regretfully after the rear end of the comfortable sleeper as it whirled off around a neighboring curve, and then took a survey of their surroundings. On the other side of the track from the station-house was the virgin forest, with a board shanty or two standing amongst the trees. The rest of the town (if it had any rest) was invisible.

"How do you get from here to Gonzales"? queried Mr. Winters of the damp looking party who was hauling his luggage under shelter of the projecting eaves of the station-house.

"By stage," was the laconic reply.

"Where is the stage office?"

"At the hotel!" growled the other.

"Well, where is the hotel?"

The baggage-man made no reply, except by an indefinite jerk of his thumb toward the station-house, and demanded:

"This your trunk?"

"Yes," said Mr. Winters.

"Gimme your check."

Mr. Winters made no reply; and the baggage-man, having secured the check, disappeared within the station, closing the door after him with a bang.

Mr. Winters seated Miss Dolly on the trunk, and proceeded to reconnoiter the surroundings. After a time, he returned with the information that he had found the hotel, and that the Gonzales stage was due, but detained probably by the state of the roads. He thought that Miss Dolly had better go over to the hotel to await its arrival. They proceeded accordingly around the station-house, and crossed a wide, muddy street to a straggling row of rough-board houses, one of which was the hotel.

It was an exceedingly rough structure, in the most primitive style of architecture, made indeed of undressed boards nailed upright to a framework, with no attempt at finish, outside or in, except an ancient coat of whitewash, and—but why attempt a description? You could not understand it, gentle reader, unless you have "been there." If you have, description is useless. Our travelers entered the office parlor, sitting-room, dining-room, all in one, seated themselves on chairs bottomed with rawhide, and waited. The room was also the postoffice, and several of the townsmen were assembled there to get their mail, and discuss the news. Mine host was a rough, but kind-hearted man, who did all in his power to make his guests comfortable, assured them that the stage would probably come along directly, and regaled them with fried bacon and eggs and boiled cabbage. And so they waited and watched the loungers come and go, looking curiously at their slouchy habits, and suspiciously at their openly worn revolvers, while listening to their accounts of a fracas that had occurred a day or two before in a neighboring village, and had

resulted in the death of one or two innocent parties. The day wore heavily and damply on, and still the stage did not arrive, and nothing occurred to relieve the intolerable tedium of their waiting. Miss Dolly grew melancholy. Mr. Winters grew impatient. "'Fraid you'll have to put up here to-night," said the hotel-keeper consolingly. "Reckon something's happened to the stage."

Just at this juncture an ambulance stopped at the door. It was supported on three wheels and a pole, was drawn by a pair of jaded-out mules, and was covered with mud from top to bottom.

"Hallo, inside!" shouted a harsh voice from the vehicle.

"Hallo!" responded mine host, stepping quickly to the door.

"Got any room for travelers?" said the man in the ambulance, showing his face (a young, fine-looking face, but stern and rough). "My avalanche's broke down, and my mules is played out. I reckon we'll have to stay here till to-morrow."

"All right. Plenty of room," responded mine host. Which way did you come?"

"From Lockport," answered the young man, getting out of his sorry turn-out.

"Where's the stage? Seen any thing of it?"

"Yes, it's waiting t'other side of Plum Creek. It's a-booming, I tell you. I had to swim for it. I'd a gone back to Lockport, but I've got some particular business down this way, and couldn't wait. Do you know whether there's a feller named Blow a-preaching in Gonzales now? I heard he was there the other day."

"Oh, yes. They're having a high old time. Big revival going on, and I heard that Blow was going to join the Baptists."

"Well, I want to be there at the baptizing, that's all."

By this time the young man had succeeded in extricating from his disabled ambulance, first a valise or two, and then a lady, whom he led into the hotel. Mr. Winters and Miss Dolly looked with considerable interest on the new arrival.

"Sit down, Hannah," said the young man, "while I look after the team."

Hannah sat down accordingly. She was a young woman, with a round, plump figure, and an exceedingly fair face, dressed in semi-mourning. Miss Dolly approached her at once with offers of dry clothing, and soon an acquaintance was struck up, which grew as the evening advanced.

To make a long story short, our friends were invited to share the accommodations of the ambulance to continue their journey the following day, as there seemed little prospect of the arrival of the stage. A miserable, wet night was succeeded by a worse day. The young man (whom they soon discovered to be Hannah's brother) succeeded in having his vehicle repaired, and somewhat after noon the whole party bade farewell to their dreary stopping-place, and took the southward road through the still falling rain. Somehow it happened that Mr. Winters shared the seat with the handsome young stranger. Of course it was wholly accidental. He felt an interest in her that he could not explain. Her smile was very sweet, her voice was low and musical, her hand was small and soft. (He had held it for a moment as he helped her into the carriage.) And though she seemed somewhat silent and melancholy, she was not nearly so much so as Miss Dolly, and he soon succeeded in drawing her out amazingly, and they were presently the best of friends. Before long an interchange of small confidences began. She was a widow, he was a bachelor. She was a Texan, he was a New Yorker. She had cattle and land, he had stocks and bank

accounts. His name was Winters, hers was Weekhart.

The rain poured down heavily and heavier. The mud was deep and stiff. The beasts were tired. The evening drew on apace. The driver grew angry and impatient, and swore *sotto voce*. It grew darker; the road became invisible; splash, splash, they went through mud and water. The occupants of the ambulance sat in silence a long while. Finally Mr. Winters suggested that the road was very rough; and so indeed it seemed, for the ambulance rolled and pitched like a vessel in a storm, and presently, with a loud crack, came to a stand-still.

"Whoa!" shouted the driver with an oath. "Rough road? I don't reckon there's any road at all. Curse the mules! Who'd a-thought they'd a-took across the prairie. We're in the hog-wallers—that's where *we* are."

"The what?" asked Mr. Winters.

"The hog-wallers!"

"What are hog-wallows?" asked Miss Dolly, innocently.

"The prairie," answered the driver. "We've left the road, and are out on the prairie somewhere, and the tongue of the avalanche's broke, and I reckon we'll have to stay where we are unless I can find a house. I wish I had my hands on that feller, Blow, now. He'll pay for getting me into this fix." The speaker got out and proceeded to examine the ground. He found his conjecture correct. The ambulance stood on a rough, grassy prairie. He groped round all sides as far as he dare go in search of a road, but no road was to be found.

During his absence Miss Dolly said to Mrs. Weekhart, "What Mr. Blow is it that your brother is speaking of—the evangelist of that name?"

"Yes," assented Mrs. Weekhart.

"Do you know Mr. Blow?"

"Yes, somewhat," answered Mrs. Weekhart reservedly.

"I suppose you have heard him preach?"

"Yes," very stiffly.

"Is there a gentleman traveling with him named Smith? Mr. J. S. Smith?"

"No. There was when he first came to Texas, I believe, but he found some relative at Cleburne, and left Mr. Blow."

"Where is Cleburne?"

"Up in North Texas. But he ain't there now. I think his uncle lives down in Gonzales County somewhere."

"Then Mr. Smith is not with Mr. Blow now?"

"No."

"Do you think Mr. Blow knows where he is?"

"No, I am sure he does not, or—that is—I don't think he does. Mr. Smith treated him very badly, I heard."

"I don't believe it," said Miss Dolly sharply. "More likely it was the other way. Mr. Smith is a gentleman and Mr. Blow is a scoundrel. I know all about him."

As this was a conclusion with regard to Mr. Blow's character at which Mrs. Weekhart had been gradually arriving, she knew not what to reply. Presently she asked, "Do you know Mr. Blow?"

"I know enough about him," said Miss Dolly.

"I wish you would tell me what you know. I have special reasons for asking." Miss Dolly assented and gave a sketch of Mr. Blow as she knew him, including his heartless desertion of his wife, which she dwelt upon with great pathos.

"I'm so glad you have told me all this before we got to Gonzales," said Mrs. Weekhart with fervor. "I have been engaged to Mr. Blow, or Blowman, as

you call him, and he left—I mean my brother and I were just going on to make him—that is, to find him in Gonzales. Oh, I hate him—the villain! the scoundrel! That is just the way he would have served me. Marry him? I hate him! I wish brother had—" Mrs. Weekhart burst into tears. Her head fell naturally enough upon Mr. Winters' shoulder, who gallantly endeavored to console her; and in the midst of this scene, which the dense darkness rendered invisible, the brother returned to the ambulance and announced his intention of firing his revolver to attract the attention of any one who might be within hearing. A quick flash followed, and Mrs. Weekhart sat up as suddenly as though the ball had struck her. The report rang out through the heavy air. There was no response except the drip of the unwearying rain. Again the pistol was fired, and again. After the third discharge there came booming back through the pitchy darkness an uncertain sound that might have been thought an echo by one less skilled in such things than Mrs. Weekhart's brother.

"There's somebody, anyway," he said, and after an interval fired again. This time the response came more clearly. "He's coming this way," said the young man, and waiting still longer again discharged his revolver. The reply came quite sharply, and after a few minutes a faint "Hallo."

"Shout if you can, Mr. Winters," said the young man, "I'm too hoarse."

Mr. Winters put his head out of the ambulance and shouted loudly and clearly. It was answered several times, and presently they heard the splash, splash, of a horse's feet on the wet ground.

"Hallo!" said a voice.

"Hallo!" said the young man. "Do you know where the road is?"

"No, do you?"

"No!"

The stranger's horse stopped close to the ambulance and he said: "I say, stranger, I started for Gonzales this morning, but it's a beastly hard place to find in the night. Are you lost too?" Miss Dolly sprang out of the ambulance crying, "I know that voice! That's you, Jacob, that's you! Don't you know Dolly?"

Mr. Smith, for it was no other, seemed to know. He was off his horse in a twinkling. It was a moist occasion. Even the clouds cried—in fact, they had been at it for some time. Miss Dolly weeped, and so did Mr. Smith, and what else they did nobody could see. It was too dark for that, but there were sundry sounds that sounded less doleful than sobs. Mrs. Weekhart cried, but Mr. Winters did not. All the crying was soon over, however. Even the sky dried its face, and wiped its eyes, and an hour after Mr. Smith's arrival the stars were shining brightly, and so were Miss Dolly's eyes, and so was a fire that the united efforts of Mrs. Weekhart's brother and Mr. Smith and Mr. Winters succeeded in kindling with some very wet brushwood that they managed to find in the neighborhood. Seated around this fire on the seats taken from the ambulance, our party, though all wet, and all tired, and all hungry, enjoyed themselves amazingly. A general explanation took place, and a general interchange of confidences.

People living among the conventionalities of civilized life have no conception at all of the rapid development of friendship, and even of warmer feelings, that is fostered by such circumstances as those here narrated. Mr. Winters even confessed the attachment that he had felt for Miss Dolly, and the interested motives that had led him to accompany her upon what he regarded as her utterly hopeless quest for Mr. Smith. But after all he was glad that it had

been so unexpectedly successful. He heartily congratulated both of them, and said that his own affection for her was more whim than feeling; that he had hoped to unite their families and fortunes, but on the whole was rather glad that he was disappointed, especially since he had found that love was more than fancy; and he glanced meaningly at Mrs. Weekhart's face who sat next him. She blushed. He could see that, even by the fire-light.

A long silence fell over the party. At last Mr. Winters spoke out, at the same time boldly raising his hand which had been hidden between himself and Mrs W— and in which hers was clasped, and laying it in the sight of all upon his knee. "I say, Mrs. Weekhart's brother—I don't know any other name for you —there is no use of mincing matters. You are an outspoken fellow, and so am I. I love your sister. I loved her from the first moment my eyes fell on her. I love her better than anything in the world, and I want to marry her to-morrow. I am rich, and respectable, and I have reason to believe that she loves me. What do you say to it?"

"Now that's what I call business," answered the other. "I like you. What do you say, Hannah? How about Blow?"

"I hate him!" said Mrs. Weekhart, and she proceeded to tell what she knew about Mr. Blowman's past, Miss Dolly and Mr. Smith rounding up the story.

"Well!" ejaculated the widow's brother. "He's a worse one than I thought. I was a going to his wedding to-morrow. And not very willingly either. But now he's not going to be married. That's settled. We'll have a wedding, though—two of them. But I'm not done with Blow, or Blowman, or whatever his name is. I'll fix him! Danged if he shan't ride a yaller steer before I get through with him—the whining, thieving, lying, swindling scoundrel!"

The dawn began to appear on the eastern sky, and Mrs. Weekhart's brother, having vented his feelings, began to busy himself with his broken vehicle, which by sunrise was in a state to bear them onward. Knowing now the points of the compass, he was not at all disconcerted by the lack of a road, and the party was soon riding southward over the sodden prairie, and in the course of an hour sighted the town, which they entered ere long, taking their way to a hotel, where very soon dry clothes, hot coffee and a bountiful breakfast made them forget the discomforts of the past night. And indeed a jollier, happier party could scarcely be found in the whole state of Texas.

The inquiries of Mrs. Weekhart's brother soon elicited the fact that the day was one of great religious importance to the community. A monster revival had been in progress for some time. Many converts had been made. Mr. Blow, the leading figure in the work, had declared his adherence to the Baptist cause, and had advocated it so ably that himself and thirty others were that very day to be immersed in the Guadalupe River, which ran conveniently by.

But here ends the chapter.

CHAPTER XXIII

"GIVE THE DEVIL HIS DUE"

"Come, Brother Winters, I've got to go to the baptizing. I'm going to take a hand in the ceremonies. Are you in for it?"

"Now, brother, don't go," pleaded Mrs. Weekhart, "you'll get into trouble, and like enough get hurt."

"Oh, hush, Hannah. Give us a rest. I tell you I've got to play dancing-master. Have you got a shooting-iron, Brother Winters?" (Mr. Winters nodded assent.) "I don't know that we'll need 'em, but its best to be prepared. You'll go along, Smith?"

Smith glanced at Miss Dolly. "I wouldn't miss it for anything," he said.

So the three went off together and wended their way toward the river, one of many groups of people traveling in the same direction.

"What are you going to do?" asked Smith, as they walked along.

"Well, I think the best thing will be for me to give in an experience, if there's a chance. I'll make one anyhow. And when I get through I pity old Blow. There'll be plenty of boys there, all ready for some fun."

But a short distance behind our three friends was a carriage moving slowly in the same direction. Within this vehicle sat four gentlemen and Mr. Blow, conversing as they rode. A single glance would have been sufficient to convince anybody that his compan-

ions were ministers; at least their black clothes and white neckties seemed to indicate as much. One of the worthy parsons said: "I am rejoiced, Mr. Blow, that you have seen your way clear to take this important step that we are to-day about to consummate, as it were. It will give your labors in this community vastly greater efficiency, so to speak, for the reason that the people hereabouts are, as you might say, solid on the point of baptism."

"Yes," answered Mr. Blow. "I agree with you entirely, Mr. Ducker. But let us not at the eleventh hour misunderstand each other. I have endeavored to make it plain in our conferences that I yield only the historical point—you understand. I concede that it is probable, merely probable, that our Lord was immersed in the Jordan, and that it is well enough to follow his example, which I am willing to do for the sake of the influence—ah—that is, the power of example. But I am not willing to commit myself to the statement that immersion is necessary to salvation. I don't believe in ordinances, sir. Religion is of the soul. Conversion is the great thing. If a man is once converted, he is saved from hell: and you know as well as I that conversion is the only thing of consequence. That is what the Scripture means by baptism, in most places."

"Well, I can't wholly agree with you; can you, Brother Plunger? Don't you esteem immersion a saving rite?"

"Hem," said Bro. Plunger. "That depends on the meaning you attach to the word saving. Now, I am not willing to limit it so as to exclude our fellow-Christians from heaven. I would apply it solely to church fellowship. As Brother Blow very justly observes, spiritual experiences far outrank mere rites. In fact, I think the mass of our modern divines, while maintaining the absolute necessity of following Christ down

into the water, as a matter of form and discipline, agree that the ordinance has no magical power to work a change of heart. To state the matter clearly, one must be baptized to be saved, but baptism has no spiritual effect. The church requires us to have faith before baptism, and simply limits her communion, not the number of the elect, to those who are immersed."

"*Your* church, you mean," said No. 3, with some asperity. "Thank God, *we* believe in open communion. We have too much charity to shut our brethren out from God's table."

"Well, brethren," said Bro. Ducker pacifically, "this is no time for theological discussion. Let us leave that to its sphere. We are all at one on the great point of immersion, and are united in being buried with Christ under the water. Let us love as brethren, and not allow our good work to be spoiled by any minor dissensions, at this supreme moment."

Said Mr. Blow: "I agree entirely with Brother Ducker, but I am anxious to have it plain that I commit myself to no point of doctrine in this matter. It is wholly a question of practice, and I yield for the sake of the influence—that is, its power for good over the people."

"Here is the place," said Bro. Plunger, as the carriage drew up near the river-side, where a considerable company was assembled. "But I do not think that the candidates are quite all here yet. Suppose we indulge in some spiritual exercises before proceeding to administer the rite? A word of exhortation with Bro. Blow's accustomed eloquence might have a happy effect on this solemn occasion."

This suggestion met the hearty assent of all, and the party of divines descended from their conveyance, and ascended a little knoll, when Bro. Plunger called the crowd around, and having explained their inten-

tion, gave out a hymn. The hymn having been sung, two lines at a time, Bro. Ducker offered prayer—a very skillful prayer, thanking God for the superior knowledge and consistency of the close-communion Baptists, to the manifest annoyance of his open-communion brother. A passage from the Scripture was then read describing the baptism of our Lord, and Brother Blow was announced as about to say a few words.

Mr. Blow was in a happy vein. He announced his text: "'And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory.'

"That was a large request to make. He could not have asked for more: 'I beseech thee, show me thy glory.' Why, it is the greatest petition that man ever asked of God," etc. (For the remainder of the discourse the curious reader is referred to Spurgeon's Sermons, Second Series.)

It was delivered with great power and unction, and held the hearers spell-bound. Several of them seemed very much affected. Three young men especially who sat upon a log not far from the speaker, seemed much moved and continually interrupted him with groans, and outcries of "Amen!" "That's so!" "Go in, parson!" one of them even venturing to remark, "That's what got the yaller steer"—an allusion that so disconcerted Mr. Blow that for a moment he was unable to proceed, and Bro. Ducker stepped down to admonish the young men to restrain their feelings until the sermon should be concluded. This admonition would probably have been disregarded, but that it was reinforced by some strong hints in the crowd around that, if they did not "hold their jaw," they might be thrown into the river.

The sermon was finally finished, and after another disjointed hymn, Bro. Plunger called upon any that felt moved so to do, to come out on the Lord's side.

Three or four with tears confessed themselves convinced of the error of their ways. Then Mrs. Weekhart's brother arose, and advanced, wiping away imaginary tears with his coat-sleeve, and asked Bro. Plunger if he might give in an experience. "Certainly, brother, certainly," said Bro. Plunger, while Mr. Blow looked at him suspiciously. The young man turned to the crowd and said:

"I ain't much on speechifying; but I've got something to say to you fellers, if you'll let me, and it ain't about your souls neither. This feller what's been preaching here, is a hypocrite, and a lying, whining horse-thief, and a scoundrel what goes around swindling people. He ain't no preacher at all, but a scalawag. He run away from his wife and children up North, and set up for a preacher on his own account. He's a thief, and I can prove it. He run away from his family and left his wife to die of a broken heart, and he knows it. He's a black-hearted liar, and I'm one that will help to tar-and-feather him and ride him on a rail."

This oratorical effort created an immense excitement. Loud cries arose from the surging crowd. "Put him down!" "Pitch him in the river!" "Ride him on a rail!" Mr. Blow, with face as white as wax, started to walk off as fast as his legs could carry him. "Stop that lying preacher!" shouted the young man. Mr. Smith headed off Mr. Blow.

"You're not going away from here this way, Blowman," said he,

"Oh, Smith, dear Smith, save me! Smith, don't let them drown me! I'll pay you, I'll give you everything I've got, but don't let them hurt me."

"Never mind; they shan't kill you," said Mr. Smith, "I don't want your dirty money, but I want to see the right thing done." The crowd was very much divided. Some cried to hang Mr. Blow; some shouted to

throw his accusers into the river; and there were evident signs of brewing violence—some even had their revolvers in their hands, when Mr. Ducker mounted a log, and shouted: "Lynch! Judge Lynch, step out here, and settle this matter, or there'll be somebody hurt."

Judge Lynch, a burly man who seemed to have great influence over the throng, at once sprang upon a stump and shouted, "Order, order! Stop your noise there, will you! Listen to me!"

Quiet being measurably obtained he proceeded:

"Now, boys, we all want to do the fair thing, don't we? (Cries of Yes! yes!) Well now, if what this young fellow says is true, this preacher ought to be ridden out of town on a rail, and if it ain't true his accuser ought to be thrown into the river for saying it. Now, don't let anybody leave the grounds, till we try the case. Here, make a ring. Brown, you'll do for sheriff; impanel a jury, will you, and let every fellow say his say."

The impromptu court was soon organized. Judge Lynch sat on the woolsack—the top of a stump—a jury of twelve men were selected, placed upon a fallen log, and duly sworn by the extempore sheriff. The ladies who had come to the baptizing, by this time had taken their departure, save a few bold spirits who stood at a distance to witness the proceedings.

"Now, boys," said the judge to the crowd, "we all bind ourselves to stand by the verdict?" All assented.

Here Mr. Blow, seeing the danger of immediate violence past, plucked up a little courage and said:

"I object to these proceedings, I demand to be set at liberty. You have no right to—"

"Now, look here, parson," said the judge, "you'd better hold your tongue, and let the court proceed. We propose to see the fair thing, and if you kick, I won't answer for your being ducked a time or two."

"Yes, Bro. Blow," said Bro. Ducker, "it's best to be quiet. We'll get justice done." So Bro. Blow held his peace, and sat down in considerable trepidation. "The court is opened," said the judge. "Mr. Sheriff, bring in the plaintiff."

"Come, young feller," said the sheriff, "stand up, and say your say."

Mrs. Weekhart's brother stood up, and said, "I ain't got nothing to say but what I have said already. This feller, Blow, that's been a-preaching here, his name ain't Blow at all, but Blowman; he used to live up in Illinois somewhere. He left his wife and children, and run off with some money, and come down here and set up for a preacher, and he's been going around the country lying and swindling; and I say he ought to be tarred and feathered. Here's a man here that knowed him at home and can tell all about him."

"Is that all you've got to say?" demanded the judge.

"Yes, that's about all."

"Sit down then. Mr. Sheriff, put the witness on the stand."

"Come, you feller, stand up," said the sheriff to Mr. Smith.

"Do you know the prisoner at the bar?" asked the judge. Mr. Smith nodded assent.

"Tell us all you know about him." Mr. Smith proceeded to give a circumstantial account of his acquaintance with Mr. Blow, omitting nothing.

"Is that all *you* have to say?" asked the judge, when he had concluded.

"Yes," said Mr. Smith.

"Plaintiff, have you got any more witnesses to bring before this court?" asked the judge.

"No, I don't reckon it needs any more," said the young man confidently.

"Have you got anything more to say?"

"No."

"Very well then, plaintiff rests the case. Bring in the defendant."

"Here he is," said the sheriff pointing to Mr. Blow.

"Well, defendant," asked the judge, "what have you got to say to these charges?"

Mr. Blow arose and looked around. The company evidently regarded him with disfavor; even the ministers stood apart. He plucked up his courage and in the energy of despair said:

"Gentlemen, I don't think that you have any right to detain me here, or to listen to these men. But since I must speak, I will. I appeal to your justice in this matter. Now as for these charges against my character, they are simply false. I have no family, nor ever had. I never lived in Illinois. I was born in North Carolina. My father is an eminent Methodist minister there, the Rev. James A. Blow, and two of his brothers are ministers also. I have a brother who is district attorney, John P. Blow, another who is sheriff of Wildcat County, L. R. Blow. A telegram to any of these men, or to any prominent man in the state will show you who I am, and that these fellows have trumped up this story to injure my character, and to ruin my work here".—

"It's a lie!" broke in Mrs. Weekhart's brother.

"Order in the court!" cried the judge.

"Well, I don't propose to have him stand up there and lie like that!" retorted the indignant young man.

"Look here!" said the sheriff. "You've got to keep mum, or you'll get hurt; you've had your say, and the parson's got to have his."

Mr. Blow felt encouraged, and proceeded: "Yes, it's done to injure my work. I came to Texas some months ago at the urgent invitation of many influential friends. You know Rev. Mr. Sturmup of Waco? (turning to Mr. Ducker) He was one of them. I have

worked with the ministers in Waxahatchie, Waco, Belton, Austin, and many other places. Ask them whether I am a liar, or a thief, or a swindler. Nay, brethren, my work here speaks for me, have I not preached the gospel faithfully? And what reward have I received beyond a few paltry collections? Whom have I swindled? Whom have I lied to? Whom have I stolen from? I defy them, or anybody, to bring any evidence against my character that would stand for a moment in a court of justice. And suppose, now, for the sake of argument, that all the things that they say were true. That I had unpaid debts, and a family at home, and had assumed a false name, and had received large sums of money by collections in various places, are they such dreadful crimes? Can a man be hung for being in debt? or drowned for having a wife and children? or ridden on a rail for altering his name? or abused because friends have seen fit to give him money? But they are not true, not one of them. They are false lies that these fellows have trumped up to break up my work here in Gonzales." Mr. Blow saw that he was producing a favorable effect, and proceeded with increasing spirit.

"I know these men, both of them. This one—I don't remember his name—but he is a rough, who lives in the northern part of the state, and on several occasions tried to break up my meetings. On one occasion he attempted to shoot me because I rebuked his wicked and violent behavior in public. He vowed to take revenge on me, and no doubt has followed me here for that purpose. He is a notorious scoundrel who is only unhung because he has managed to elude the officers of the law."

Mrs. Weekhart's brother sprang to his feet, and drew his revolver, only to find himself disarmed and pinioned by strong hands. "Come, now," said the sheriff to him, "we don't take any of that. The

parson shan't be interrupted. We mean fair play here."

Mr. Blow continued: "As for this other man I know him well. He pretended to be converted at one of my meetings, and accompanied and sung for me some little time. But I soon found out that his only motive was selfish greed. He thought that the meetings would yield large collections, of which he should have the lion's share, and when disappointed in this, he left me, after abusing me roundly, and vowed that he would do me some injury, and no doubt he came here to-day for that purpose. These, gentlemen, are the simple facts, and I take my stand upon them. I appeal to your love of justice, I beg you to defend me from the violence of these my causeless enemies, and I commit myself to God."

"Are you through, sir?" said Judge Lynch respectfully.

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Gentlemen of the jury," said the judge, "you have heard the facts of the case. You will be allowed ten minutes to decide your opinion."

The ten minutes passed in perfect silence, broken only by whispered conversation.

"Time's up, gentlemen. What is your opinion? Please speak in order—one at a time. Number one, what do you say?"

Number one stood up. "Well, fellows," he said, "I'm a little mixed. I rather think the parson's got the best of it. I ain't seen no harm in him since he's been here. You all know I don't go much on preachers, no how; but I suppose they means well, and I'm in for letting him go, and if half he says about these fellers is true, they ought to be ducked." Each one of the jury in like manner delivered his opinion, and the agreement was pretty unamimous. Considerable excited debate followed, when the judge stood up on

his stump, and said, "I move that we let the parson go, and give them other fellows twenty-four hours to leave town. All in favor of the motion say, Aye."

"Aye!" came thundering from the crowd. "All opposed, No." A very feeble "No," arose. "The ayes have it. Parson, you're at liberty, and you fellows, you'd better make yourselves scarce." Mr. Blow and the ministers, his friends, made their way to their carriage and drove rapidly to town as the crowd dispersed.

It was the dusk of the evening when Mr. Blow entered the house of his entertainer, a gentleman of some prominence in the city. Not long afterward a close carriage drove up to the door and presently drove away again in hot haste. About ten o'clock, three men came to the door and asked to see Mr. Blow. They were told that he was not in. Where was he? No one knew.

And so, gentle reader, no one knows unto this day. His name is heard no more, but that does not signify. He may have another. It is a matter much to be regretted, for no doubt his adventures, if they could be recorded, would prove interesting and instructive; and Mrs. Weekhart, although now the happy Mrs. Winters, would be glad to recover the cash advance that she so trustingly made him. She therefore authorizes here the offering of a reward of $500 for any information that will lead to his discovery. It is possible that he may be still operating in Texas.

The present chronicler well knows how heartily Texans detest all sham and pretense, whether in religion or politics or anything else, and hereby presents his humble apology to them, individually and collectively, for having been forced to follow his hero through their beautiful and mighty state.

Long may her brilliant star shine in the van of lib-

erty and progress, and long may her people be spared the visitation of an Abel Blow, or any of his numerous coadjutors. God bless her!

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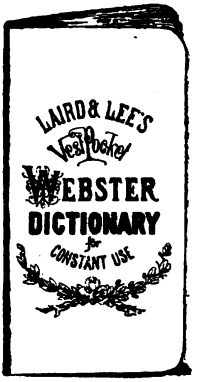
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